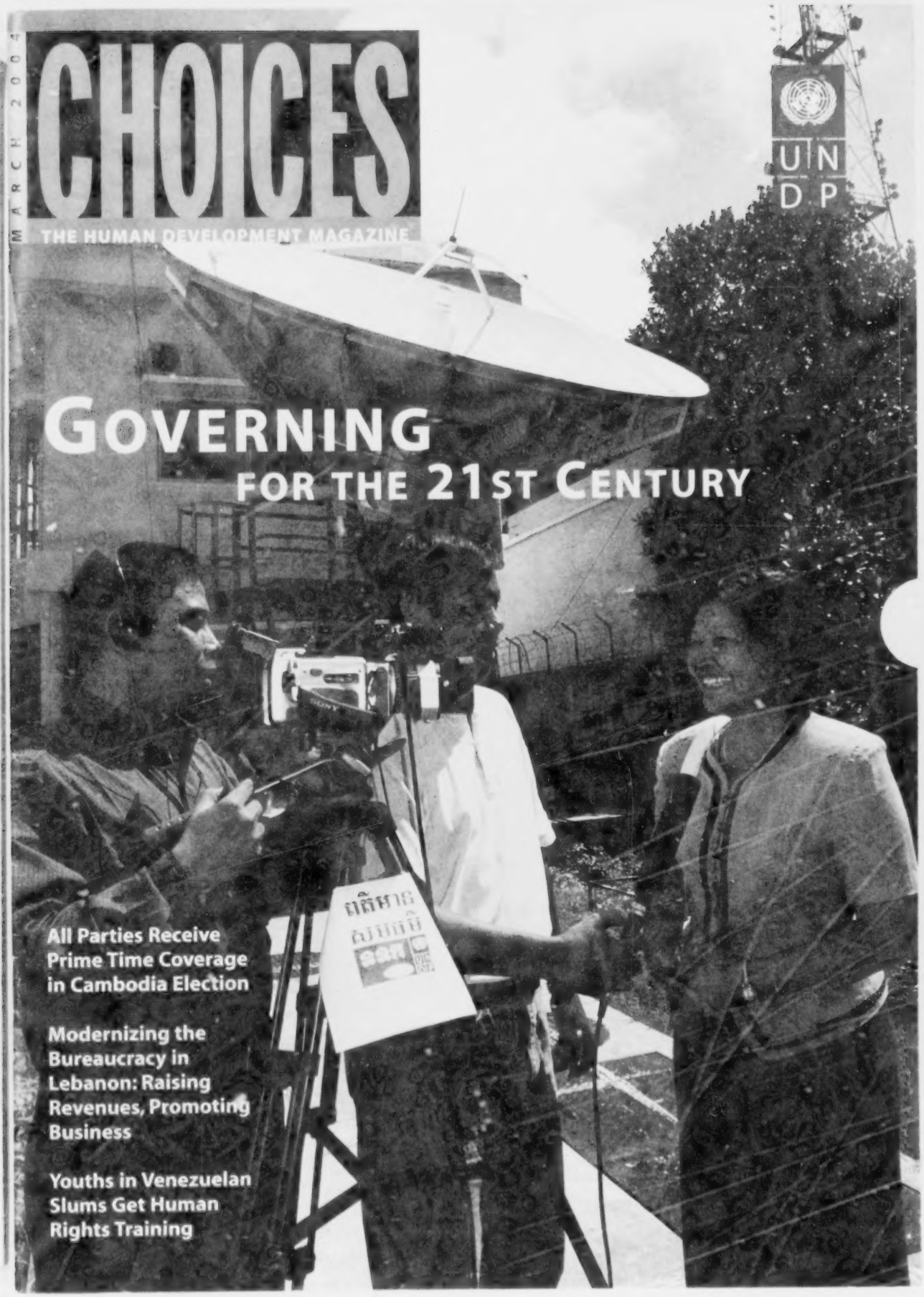
MARCH 2004

CHOICES

THE HUMAN DEVELOPMENT MAGAZINE

UNDP

GOVERNING FOR THE 21ST CENTURY



All Parties Receive Prime Time Coverage in Cambodia Election

Modernizing the Bureaucracy in Lebanon: Raising Revenues, Promoting Business

Youths in Venezuelan Slums Get Human Rights Training

FROM THE EDITOR-IN-CHIEF

Voting Against Poverty

When the best national football teams in Africa took the field in Tunis in January during the African Cup of Nations, the stadium was festooned with all sorts of banners bearing slogans to meet the Millennium Development Goals—the eight time-bound, measurable targets with the overarching aim of reducing poverty by 2015. But more than slogans, most of the players, whether they played for the Lions from Senegal or the "Africa 2015" team from Egypt, pledged to work toward achieving these Goals.

Djibril Diallo and Syndiely Wade at a press conference for the African Cup of Nations in Tunis.

And a month before, in Basel, Switzerland, more than 40,000 people watched an exhibition match between squads consisting of friends of two of Europe's best known stars, Ronaldo and Zinedine Zidane, which raised more than a million Swiss Francs for UNDP projects to fight poverty.

Starting with "Africa 2015," UNDP, along with its partners, is enlisting writers, athletes and artists to let people know about these Goals. There is urgency to the task. While the world's leaders unanimously agreed to the Millennium Development Goals in September 2000, there are ominous signs that not enough is being done to ensure that the Goals will be met. To achieve results by 2015, it is clear that we will have to redouble our efforts now.

Simply put, more people need to know about the Goals. More people need to be involved in efforts to significantly reduce the ranks of those living in extreme poverty. The Goals are an agenda, a platform, that if people could vote on, they would vote yes. They concern the very issues that matter most to people.

But voting, and democratic governance, is still a nascent enterprise in too many countries. Too often, the issues that matter are not first and foremost on the national agenda. Too often, governance has more to do with the desire of those in power to maintain their position at any cost. Democratic governance is not a panacea for only some cultures and some parts of the world. Today, most of the countries that are the poorest are also the least democratic. And the people who live in the countries that have to work the hardest to m the Millennium Development Goals are the least likely have the chance to push for them.

This issue of CHOICES explores measures that coun have taken to improve governance. Starting with election look at Cambodia, which experimented with a system to p vide all major parties with fair television coverage during last election. And we also take a quick look at Georgia, wh bungled election hastened the departure of the last presi

Then we move on to Rwanda, where women have wo almost half the seats in the country's parliament—more than any other country, including Sweden, the longtim leader in this area.

In Venezuela, a novel project is helping youths from Caracas' slums learn about human rights and the abuse of ri that has helped fuel a cycle of poverty. From the Philipp we hear from the Chief Justice of the Supreme Court, Hi G. Davide, Jr., who, with assistance from UNDP, is spea heading a programme to broaden court access to the po In the Republic of the Congo, a new legal clinic has op offices in Brazzaville to help the poor enforce their righ

In Lebanon, a restructured and modernized Ministr Finance has surprised Lebanese citizens by offering fast service at its Customs and land registry departments. T faster service has opened opportunities for business. An Tajikistan, we find that local communities in a poor vall have formed local development councils that have ident fied and promoted small development projects.

Meeting the Millennium Development Goals requir the right government actions, but it also requires the rig people. We lost one of the best last November when Sha Capeling-Alakija, the Executive Coordinator for United Nations Volunteers, passed away. Few people can match Sharon's ability to motivate so many to volunteer for the very tasks that are needed to achieve success in the attai ment of the Goals. We will miss her.

Djibril Diallo

Cover: News teams provided coverage of all political parties in Cambodia election. Photo: David Dahmen/UNDP

CHOICES
THE HUMAN DEVELOPMENT MAGAZINE
Volume 13 Number 1
March 2004

Editor-in-Chief
Djibril Diallo

Editor
Daniel Shepard

Managing Editor
Rajeswary Iruthayanathan

Desig
Ferro+Ferro Graphic Communication
Arlington, Virginia

Production Manager
Maureen Lynch

Editorial/Production Associate
Jennifer Prince

CHOICES Online
Milagros Feliciano

Distribution
Shamsuz Zaman

Special Adviser to the Editor-in-Chie
Nadine Gordimer

Advisers
Dianne Abbott
Mervin Aubespin
Sandy Close
Inge Kaul
Geoffrey Lean

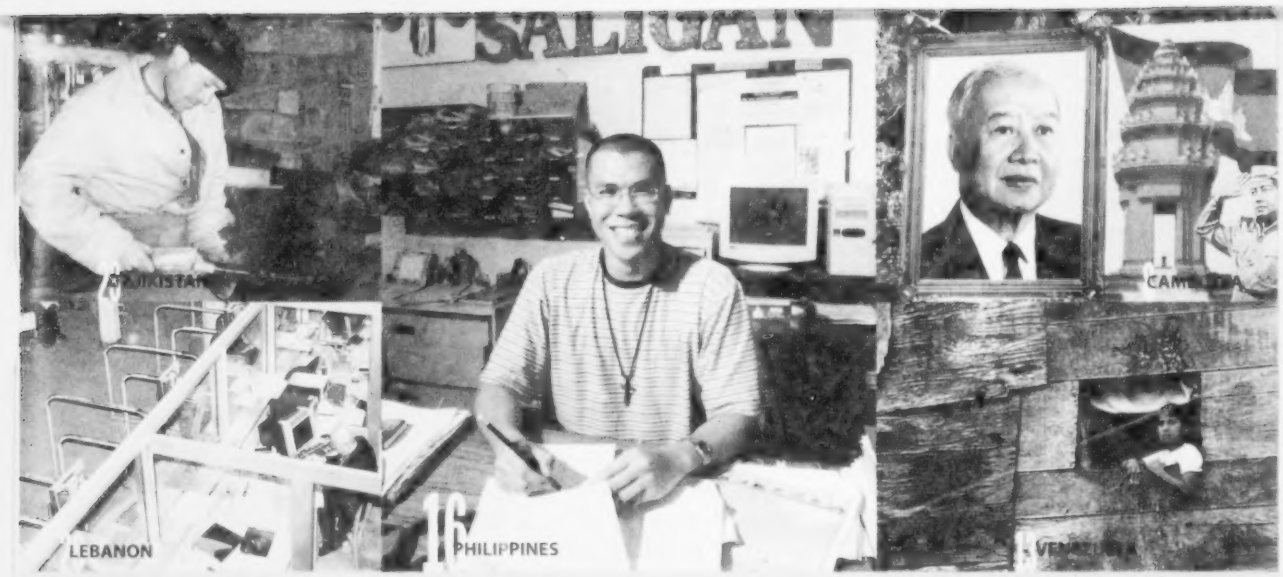
UNDP is the UN's global development network, advocating for change and connecting countries to knowledge, experience and resources to help people build a better life.

CHOICES
is published four times a year by:
Communications Office
Office of the Administrator
United Nations Development Programme
One United Nations Plaza
New York, NY 10017, USA
Tel: (1-212) 906 5325
Fax: (1-212) 906 5364
E-mail: choices@undp.org

The articles in this magazine do not necessarily reflect the official views or policies of the United Nations Development Programme, nor do the boundaries and names shown on maps imply official endorsement by the United Nations. Articles may be freely reproduced as long as credit is given and tear sheets are provided to the editor. CHOICES is available in English, French and Spanish.

The printed matter i recyclable. Phønix-Trykkeriet A/S, Viby Denmark. ISO 1400 certified and EMAS approved.

BEST COPY AVAILABL



CONTENTS

DEPARTMENTS

4 World Development Round-up

6 The UNDP Outlook
Governing for the 21st Century

28 MDG Watch
As World Food Production Increases, So Does the Number of Hungry

30 Notebook
Report on disaster and development; Web site on Women and Security; Democracy conference in Mongolia

32 Matters of Fact

Coming in June

Investment, initiative and enterprise are powerful engines for development. Allowed to flourish, they may be the most major factors in promoting the human development that can improve the lives of millions. The June issue of CHOICES explores how opening up markets is promoting development.

GOVERNING FOR THE 21ST CENTURY

7 Governance by the Numbers

8 Cambodia Election Experiment Broadcasts Divergent Views

10 Georgia—An Election Gone Wrong

11 Rwanda's Parliament Now Leads World in Gender Parity

13 Youths in Venezuela Slums Learn to Monitor Human Rights

16 New Judicial Reforms in Philippines Aim to Address Needs of Poor

18 Congo Legal Clinic Opens Doors for Poor

19 First Person: A Reporter's Journey to Avoid Hyping Hate in the Côte d'Ivoire Press

20 Efficient Service from Revamped Finance Ministry Takes Lebanese by Surprise

23 A Harbinger of Decentralization: Local Tajik Groups Set Their Own Agenda

25 Local Governments in Poland Try to Map Future

26 Afghanis Trading AK-47s and Rockets for Civilian Jobs

27 Liberia Charting New Course for Rebuilding a Nation

Visit CHOICES Online: www.choices.undp.org

Comments? Write to **choices@undp.org**

Anti-Corruption Treaty Signed by 95 Countries

A new treaty that will make it easier to fight corruption was signed by 95 countries at a conference in Merida, Mexico last December.

The treaty, the United Nations Convention Against Corruption, requires countries to criminalize a wide range of acts of corruption, such as bribery and the embezzlement of public funds, influence peddling and the concealment and "laundering" of the proceeds of corruption. In a measure that will help developing countries, the treaty calls for the return of assets that have been plundered by former high-level officials back to new governments. Countries must also undertake measures to support the tracing, freezing, seizure and confiscation of the proceeds of corruption.

The new treaty will enter into effect after 30 countries ratify the convention. UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan said the new treaty "gives us the tools to address crime and corruption on a global scale."

Fawzi Bin Abdul Majeed Shobokshi, Permanent Representative of Saudi Arabia to the United Nations, signs the UN Convention Against Corruption.

World Summit on the Information Society

Countries attending the first phase of a UN-backed global summit on information and communications technologies in Geneva, Switzerland in December unanimously adopted a declaration on the values of an "information society." The consensus agreement calls for freedom of the press, universal access to technological progress and promoting partnerships between governments, the private sector and civil society. The second phase of the summit will take place in Tunis, Tunisia, in 2005.

The World Summit on the Information Society sparked considerable debate on bridging the Digital Divide.

Right: UNDP participated in a huge technology fair that accompanied the WSIS.

While the Geneva summit concluded with a range of sentiments aimed at reducing the digital divide, many of the tougher issues concerning resources, control of the Internet, and freedom of speech were left for resolution in Tunisia. Countries agreed to study the feasibility of a voluntary Digital Solidarity Fund.

Yoshio Utsumi, Secretary-General of the International Telecommunication Union, the lead UN organizing agency for the Summit, said he was pleased with the outcome of the meeting in that the international community had mapped a course that would take it to Tunisia in November 2005, and had agreed on a set of common principles for the information society as well as a set of actions.

UNICEF: New Effort for Girls' Education Needed to Meet Global Goals

The failure to get more girls into school over the next two years could imperil the chances of reaching the Millennium Development Goals, eight global targets with the overarching aim of halving world poverty by 2015, according to a new UNICEF report.

The report notes that illiteracy rates are still far higher among women than men, and at least nine million more girls than boys are denied of school every year. The majority of countries with the lowest secondary school enrolment rates for girls also have among the highest rates of child mortality—where more than 15 percent of children die before age five.

The greatest need is in sub-Saharan Africa, where the number of girls left out of school each year has risen from 20 million in 1990 to 24 million in 2002. Eighty-three percent of all girls out of school live in sub-Saharan Africa, South Asia, and East Asia and the Pacific.

Bangladesh and India to Save Tigers

Bangladesh and India joined forces to take a census of the tigers living in the world's largest mangrove forest, the 'Sundarbans' along the countries' common border. UNDP is supporting the initiative to save the Sundarbans, which is steadily deteriorating due to increasing population pressures and weak enforcement measures.

The Leading Killers of 2002

Of the 45 million deaths among adults worldwide in 2002, almost three-quarters were caused by noncommunicable diseases. In developed countries, 60 percent of people live until their 70th birthday; in developing countries, only 30 percent do.

In 2002, the leading killers for adults, aged 15-59, were:

HIV/AIDS	2.3 million
Heart disease	1.3 million
Tuberculosis	1.0 million
Road traffic injuries	0.8 million
Stroke	0.8 million

About 10.5 million children died in 2002. The leading causes were:

Respiratory infections	1.9 million
Diarrhoeal disease	1.6 million
Malaria	1.1 million
Measles	0.6 million
HIV/AIDS	0.4 million

Source: WHO

2004 International Year Against Slavery

The United Nations will mark 2004 as the International Year to Commemorate the Struggle against Slavery and its Abolition. The UN General Assembly proclaimed 2004 as the celebratory year to mark the bicentenary of the Haitian Revolution, which led to the establishment of the first black republic in the Western hemisphere, and, by extension, to the liberation of the peoples of the Caribbean and Latin America from slavery.

36 Journalists Killed on the Job in 2003

A total of 36 journalists were killed on the job in 2003, according to the Committee to Protect Journalists, with a third of those deaths occurring in Iraq. In 2002, 19 journalists were killed.

Antelopes Return to Native Kenya Habitat

Hunting and poaching have killed off the mountain *bongo* in its natural Mt. Kenya habitat, but the species will have a second chance to establish itself as 18 antelope *bongos*, raised in captivity in Florida, have been sent home. The plan is to first establish a breeding programme on Mt. Kenya and then slowly reintroduce the *bongo* to the region. No *bongos* have been seen in the area for nine years. It is hoped that the project, which is the result of cooperation between many international organizations including UNDP, non-governmental organizations, the Government of Kenya and the United Nations Foundation, will spur conservation efforts and livelihood initiatives in the Mt. Kenya area.

Shortly after arriving in Kenya, "Mum," a female bongo gave birth to the first bongo to be born in the country in years. The newborn bongo was named "Kenya."

Europe's Stars Battle Against Poverty

David Beckham, right, challenges Robinho, left, during exhibition "Match Against Poverty," in Basel in December.

Below: UNDP Administrator Mark Malloch Brown holding cheque for 1 million Swiss Francs (about US$700,000).

Emergency Fund to Keep Guinea-Bissau Government Services

UNDP has set up an emergency fund to help Guinea-Bissau cover a US$18.3 million budget gap and allow the West African country's transitional government to resume social services and key public administration activities.

The money will pay civil service salaries in health and education, and in critical areas such as public utilities. The fund will also support technical assistance for such vital priorities as public financial management, civil service reform and human resource management.

The government was virtually bankrupt after President Kumba Yala was overthrown in a coup last September. In an agreement forged by the military, political parties and civil society organizations, legislative elections are expected to be held in March and presidential elections within another 12 months.

MARK MALLOCH BROWN

THE UNDP OUTLOOK

Governing for the 21st Century

Today, more countries than ever are working to build democratic governance: democracy has spread from some 60 countries in 1985 to more than 140 in 2003, mostly in developing countries. Increasingly, the challenge now facing many countries is to develop institutions and processes that are more responsive to the needs of their citizens, especially the poor.

Improving the quality of democratic institutions and processes is vital because it offers the best means through which society can discuss, approve, criticize, challenge and change the route to development when the majority so decides. It is the essential foundation upon which national efforts to reduce poverty, sustain the environment, and promote human development can take place, as encapsulated in the universally agreed Millennium Development Goals.

Democracy is a long-term process that depends on strong institutions and requires participation and accountability.

Indeed, as democracy has spread, the universally agreed Millennium Development Goals have become a manifesto for the world's poor. The eight goals, ranging from halving extreme poverty and hunger by the year 2015, to making primary education available to all girls and boys and ensuring gender equality, are the pocketbook issues that show up in voter polls everywhere and to which leaders are increasingly being held to account across the developing world.

At present, however, there are at least 59 countries that are unlikely to meet the targets if present trends continue. Most of the countries that are not on track to meet the Goals do not have free and democratic political systems. While freedom and democracy are not necessarily prerequisites for development, very few democratic countries—15 according to the NGO Freedom House—are among the world's poorest. Countries where political rights and civil liberties are limited, where corruption is rampant, where ruling parties dominate for decades, where women have less opportunities or where there is ethnic or religious discrimination, tend to be among the poorest and the least likely to achieve the Goals.

Many countries are, however, discovering that elections alone do not ensure automatic success in development. As the *Human Development Report 2002* on democracy made clear, free choice of government is necessary, but not sufficient. When democracy becomes part of the establishment which presides over unchecked poverty and inequality, rather than a force for progressive reform, it is as prey to overthrow as any political system. So while democracy is a first step, democracy is not a panacea. It must deliver results and, fundamentally, be supported by a *culture* of democracy.

Democracy is a long-term process that depends on strong institutions and requires participation and accountability: a system that allows free and vigorous public debate and a peaceful means of resolving conflicts. It depends on the adherence to the principle of the rule of law. There are no short cuts. Across the world there has been a worrying trend of leaders consolidating their hold on power by altering constitutions, bullying weak legislatures and judiciaries, and manipulating elections. Ensuring that tough measures are put in place in areas such as budget oversight, procedures to ensure gender equality, and the strengthening of watchdog bodies to provide a clear commitment to human rights and honest management of public monies is essential.

UNDP is playing a leading role in supporting country efforts to build democratic governance. Broad support to build capacity for improved governance, most of it for public administration, now accounts for over 60 percent of UNDP's global technical assistance expenditures every year, and last year we carried out democratic governance programmes in a record 135 countries, spending almost $800 million worldwide. This has made us, by far, the largest multilateral provider of governance assistance.

This governance assistance is provided in six distinct areas of governance, including offering electoral assistance in more than 20 countries, most recently in Georgia's presidential election, to assistance to countries' parliaments and training that allows women to run for office. UNDP also works with many NGOs and bar associations to promote human rights and access to justice, as well as with governments from Bhutan to Mali to strengthen decentralization efforts to give people a greater voice and accountable local governments. In Africa and Latin America, we have promoted political dialogue on matters that range from peace building and new constitutions, to a national pensions or education system. We also provide assistance in public administration to help curb corruption and provide better government services, and are working to help countries utilize the benefits of ICT to support the spread of transparent, participatory and more efficient systems of government worldwide.

Good governance alone will not ensure that the Millennium Development Goals are met by 2015—vital domestic reforms, together with additional resources are needed as well. But as we monitor progress on these Goals, there is little doubt that the countries that will have made the most headway towards achieving the targets will be those countries that have open and responsive democratic systems. ■

Mark Malloch Brown is Administrator of the United Nations Development Programme.

GOVERNING FOR THE 21ST CENTURY

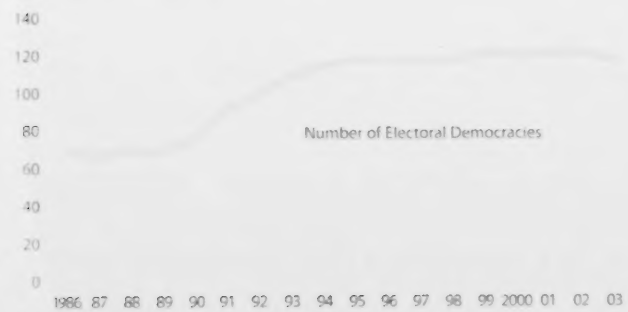
GOVERNANCE BY THE NUMBERS

There is no one way to measure government performance. Generally, people let their approval or disapproval be known in an election, if elections are allowed. But there are other measures as well, in terms of economic performance, the consistent application of the rule of law, by the inclusion of all sectors of the population in decision making.

Freedom in the World

Source: *Freedom in the World 2004*, Freedom House

Tracking Electoral Democracy



Source: *Freedom in the World 2004*, Freedom House

The Transparency International Corruption Perceptions Index 2003

Where people think the least, and the most, corruption takes place.

The highest rated

TI Rank	Country
1	Finland
2	Iceland
3	Denmark, New Zealand
5	Singapore
6	Sweden
7	Netherlands
8	Australia, Norway, Switzerland

The lowest rated

TI Rank	Country
122	Indonesia, Kenya
124	Angola, Azerbaijan, Cameroon, Georgia, Tajikistan
129	Myanmar, Paraguay
131	Haiti
132	Nigeria
133	Bangladesh

Source: www.transparency.org

Women in Parliaments

Total Members of Parliament	42,058
Gender breakdown known	40,764
Men	34,601
Women	6,163
Percentage of Women	15.1%
Nordic countries	39.7
Europe OSCE (excluding Nordics)	15.5
Americas	18.1
Asia	14.8
Sub-Saharan Africa	15.2
Pacific	13.6
Arab States	5.8

Source: Inter-Parliamentary Union, www.ipu.org

CAMBODIA ELECTION EXPERIMENT BROADCASTS DIVERGENT VIEWS

Opposition gains access to state-controlled media

BY DAVID DAHMEN

PHNOM PENH, CAMBODIA

It was a novel, if not daring, experiment to provide a "window" of independent and impartial news during the election campaign in July 2003 in an effort known as "Equity News." Everything could have gone wrong, but it worked. More than half a year later, many of the journalistic practices learned during the campaign are still evident.

"It's not Equity News anymore," says Khieu Kanharith, Secretary of State at the Ministry of Information. "It's just news."

An Equity News team. These teams provided coverage of all major political parties.

During the general elections campaign in July 2003, TV crews were positioned at key locations to cover the campaign and in an unprecedented feature, to solicit the views of the people in the street. They beamed images of poverty, disclosed corruption and aired criticism of the government. Reporters did not hesitate to report on issues such as voter intimidation, immigration, garment workers' discontent with their working conditions and other sensitive issues. And for the first time, opposition leaders' had access to the media. It was a democratic moment.

Top: Him Suong, Deputy General Director of TV station, TVK.

Right: New equipment was needed for Equity News and staff had to be quickly trained to use the new technology.

"The Equity News Campaign has clearly been a turning point for us," declares Him Suong, Deputy General Director at the government-owned TV Channel, TVK. "Our reporters and cameramen would like to continue with this kind of reporting in the future, but that would mean additional funding of course," he adds.

Equity News was initiated by the National Election Committee, endorsed by Prime Minister Hun Sen and was implemented by the Ministry of Information with technical support from UNDP. The Australian Government provided US$73,000 cost sharing with UNDP.

Recovering from war and violence

Still recovering from three decades of civil war and violence, Cambodia has experienced a period of relative stability and progress over the last five years. This situation has also allowed the government to embark on a number of critical governance reforms in an effort to strenghten the rule of law and eradicate poverty.

The overall idea behind Equity News was simply to provide balanced news coverage of the campaign. To

hieve this, each party was allocated a set percentage of ne for coverage according to a publicly disclosed formula. The fair distribution of air time had to be accompanied impartial and factual information, a difficult and demand-g task especially in the broadcast media landscape shaped decades of state-controlled information. A formula was orked out based on equitable principles, giving the three ajor parties, the ruling Cambodia People's Party, FUNC-NPEC—a coalition partner—and the Sam Rainsy Party RP), the opposition, some 90 percent of the air time, hile the other parties shared the remaining 10 percent.

It wasn't easy to mobilize all the smaller parties. "Some them didn't even have a street address or a contact hone, so it was hard to reach them," recalls Mr. Suong.

As a result of the programme, the ruling party received uch less air time than it did in the past elections, while UNCINPEC received more, and the SRP air time alloca-on jumped from zero to 19 percent.

Equity News ran on state television channel TVK and he two state radio stations, National Radio of Kampuchea M and National Radio FM96. A few days before the mpaign started, the bulletins were broadcast as part of he regular news programmes and they continued through-ut the 30-day campaign period.

"It was a change from no democracy to full democracy," ys Mr. Suong, who acknowledges that the project needed xternal help.

The state TV and radio staff were trained by two nternational media NGOs, IMPACS-the nstitute for Media, Policy and Civil Society, nd the International Journalism oundation. A Belgian News Coordinator was also brought in to oordinate the complex programme chedules.

Poster marking King Norodom Sihanouk's 50 years on the throne.

ittle time for training

he aim was to have five TV eams as well as two teams for he radio stations train the local ews for the campaign. But the elivery of TV equipment was te; the training became an on-he-job course.

"But it was intensive training nd the journalist trainers were there hroughout the campaign to assist the ournalists, at any time," says Daphne killen, a media adviser. Of course, there ere some problems but these were mainly echnical due to inexperienced handling of ew equipment."

The Equity News broadcasts met with no major edito-ial crises, but there were hurdles to overcome, as most olitician were unfamiliar with the new concept of equity. One week into the campaign, the SRP called a press con-

Although Equity News was directed at state-owned TV and radio stations, news-papers such as Rasmei Kampuchea also broadened their election coverage.

ference to announce that "they were withdrawing from Equity News on the grounds that the newscasts were biased against their party." The matter was smoothed over after a meeting and coverage of the party's activities continued.

Most of the major players thought Equity News was a success. "It certainly did facilitate our job. A lot more information was distributed to the public compared to previous elections. This was a remarkable opening for free information," says Tep Nytha, Secretary-General of the National Election Committee.

Mu Sochua, Minister of Women's and Veteran's Affairs and representative of the FUNCINPEC party, noted that women's issues were prominently raised during the election campaign. "This would rarely have happened before. Now women's grievances are portrayed along with other traditionally important issues, like taxes and foreign policy."

Less pleased with the reporting was Pok Leaksmy, spokesman of the SRP. "We were not too happy with the content of Equity News as it supported the ruling party," he says. The SRP spokesman cited instances where TVK journalists reported that "a thousand" people attended his party's rallies when, in fact, there were 10,000 people. "Still, we are pleased that UNDP gave us access to the media," he adds.

The SRP, however, did significantly increase its share of the vote, from 14 to 21 percent. FUNCINPEC's share dropped, from 31 to 20 percent while the major ruling party, CPP, increased their share of votes from 41 to 47 percent.

"I was not very optimistic from the start," says Khieu Kanharith at the Ministry of Information, "but along the

Cambodia

AT A GLANCE

Population: 13.5 million

Area: 181,040 sq km

Human Development Ranking: 130 of 173 countries

Public expenditure on education: 1.9%*

Public expenditure on health: 2.0%*

Military expenditure: 3.0%*

Women in parliament: 9.3%

GDP per capita: $1,860

*Percent of GDP

Source: Human Development Report 2003

Pen Samithy, Editor-in-Chief of newspaper Rasmei Kampuchea

road I changed my mind. Equity News was certainly good for Cambodia. The next generation will definitely benefit from this."

Although the UNDP media project was only applied to the state TV and the state-owned radio stations, some newspapers picked up on the central ideas of the project. Pen Samithy, Editor-in-Chief of the Rasmei Kampuchea newspaper, closely attached to the ruling CCP says his paper started a column called "Towards election," in which information on all political parties was provided. "However, it's hard to be totally neutral and satisfy all people," adds Mr. Samithy.

In a break with tradition, election coverage included interviews with people in the street.

More than half a year later, the new standards and practices for reporting have endured. "The concept of Equity News could well work as a model for other developing democracies," says Ms. Skillen, adding that the formula could serve as a blueprint for other domestic media outlets. And Jonathan Burrough, head of the UNDP election unit during the project, adds, "Five weeks of balanced reporting has to have left a mark on Cambodia." ■

David Dahmen, a previous contributor to CHOICES, is a freelance journalist and photographer based in Sweden. He has reported on development issues for over 20 years.

Georgia: A Mishandled Election Leads to "Rose Revolution"

The 2 November elections in Georgia were supposed to choose a new parliament. But the elections were flawed and ultimately led to the downfall of Eduard Shevardnadze who ruled the country for the last 12 years. In new presidential elections held on 4 January, Mikhail Saakashvilli was elected as President of Georgia in a landslide.

There is a widespread feeling that events would not have turned out as they did had it not been for the mishandled elections in November. President Shevardnadze was not a tyrant of the likes of former Yugoslavia leader Slobodan Milosevic or Romania's Nicolai Ceausescu, and while his popularity had dimmed as a result of economic downfall, social hardship and a dissatisfaction with his style of management, opinion polls before the election did not suggest widespread popular support for protests and strife.

But the elections, conducted in a heavy-handed manner by the party in power, created a flashpoint that ultimately allowed a well organized opposition to effectively lead the long, albeit quietly, suffering population to take to the streets to demand change in what has now become the famous "Rose Revolution."

The election preparation process already provided a glimpse of a chaotic election process that lacked many of the hallmarks of transparency and fairness. Voter registration was haphazard, voter lists were heavily flawed and the election commission took decisions that seemed to favour the government. There were irregularities concerning the counting of the ballots and a lack of impartial precinct monitors. And then, right after the election, government officials were gloating over the election results well before the results were released. Finally, when officially released, the vote tally was widely regarded as implausible.

"Despite the continued effort of UNDP and the international community to advocate for free and fair elections, coupled with technical assistance for the training of polling officials and the establishment of a media centre, there was a feeling in general that the elections would not be conducted in a transparent and democratic manner," said UNDP Programme Officer Gigi Bregadze.

The opposition seized the opportunity to launch protests, starting slowly but in a short time, mushroomed into huge rallies in the capital, Tbilisi. Thousands of Georgian from villages, frustrated by limited economic and social opportunities, poured into the capital to join in the request that the President resign.

In the recent presidential election, UNDP, with substantial support from the European Union and in close collaboration with the Organization for Security and Cooperation for Europe, was able to mobilize international support for a fair election that included training of over 10,000 workers from the Electoral Administration, assistance with the procurement of supplies, materials and goods as well as with logistics and communication, voter education, voter information, a media centre, improved domestic monitoring of the elections and quick reporting of results to the central election commission. Assistance continues in view of the end March Parliamentary elections, including additional activities to promote women's participation. ■

RWANDA'S PARLIAMENT NOW LEADS WORLD IN GENDER PARITY

Women in post-genocide era assert their agenda

BY HELEN VESPERINI

KIGALI, RWANDA

Rwanda, the tiny tea and coffee-producing country in Central Africa, known to most of the outside world as the place where one million people lost their lives in a genocide in 1994, has now surpassed Sweden as the country with the highest proportion of women legislators.

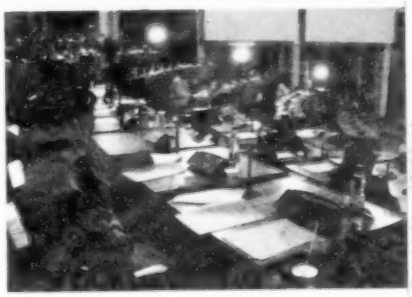
As a result of last October's elections, women now hold 48.8 percent of the seats in the National Assembly and the country has come the closest of any country in reaching parity between men and women in a national parliament, according to the Geneva-based Inter-Parliamentary Union. In Sweden, women hold 45 percent of the seats in the national parliament.

Of 80 seats in the National Assembly, 24 were reserved for women under the new Constitution. But women also won 15 non-reserved seats, yielding a total of 39 seats held in the lower house and six out of 20 seats in the Senate, the upper house. Women also hold nine out of 28 ministerial posts, among the highest proportions in the world.

"What Rwanda has achieved is by any measure anywhere in the world, remarkable and noteworthy, especially if one takes into account this country's recent political history and the development challenges that it faces," says Macharia Kamau, UNDP Resident Representative in Rwanda.

Ten years ago, extremists in government from the country's largest ethnic group, the Hutus, decided to execute its plan to exterminate the country's Tutsi minority. In the span of 100 days, almost one million people—for the most part Tutsis, but also moderate Hutus opposed to the plan, were slaughtered.

The aftermath of the genocide was particularly difficult for women. Rape victims learned that they had HIV after several years, only when they started to develop the actual symptoms of AIDS. And in addition to widows and orphans, many women whose husbands fled to the Democratic Republic of the Congo in 1994, afraid to return home, have also found themselves at the head of households.



Above: Rwanda's parliament, which has the world's highest representation by women, in session.

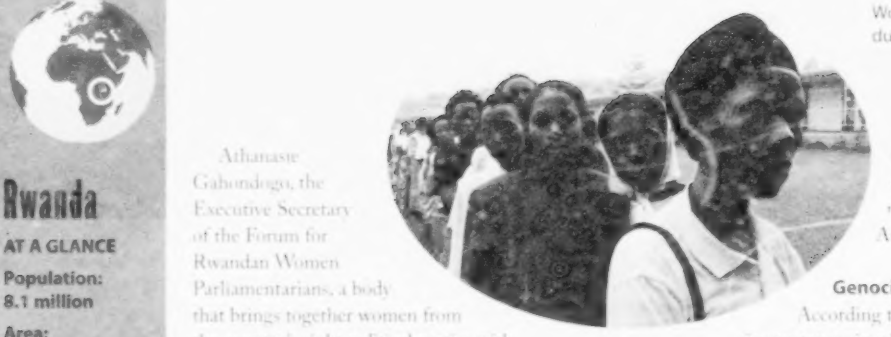
Left: From left, the Hon. Constance Rwaka, Hon. Solange Tuyisenge and Hon. Athanasie Gahondogo, recently elected representatives to Rwanda's Parliament.

History has a role in women's prominence

Women say that Rwanda's recent history is the main reason they have risen to such political prominence in a country where 60 percent of the population still lives in extreme poverty.

"If we have such a high percentage of seats today, it's not a question of chance," said Constance Mukayuhi Rwaka, a Member of Parliament and an economist who chairs the Rwandan National Assembly's Budget Commission. "After 1994 Rwanda was in quite a peculiar situation," she says. "Women had really been mobilized across the country."

Ms. Rwaka recalls that after the genocide, women throughout the country joined forces, either informally or through associations, to help out those who were widowed or orphaned during the killing.



Women lining up outside polling place during last October's election.

Rwanda

AT A GLANCE

Population: 8.1 million

Area: 26,338 sq km

Human Development Ranking: 158 of 173 countries

Public expenditure on education: 2.8%*

Public expenditure on health: 2.7%*

Military expenditure: 3.9%*

Women in parliament: 48.8%

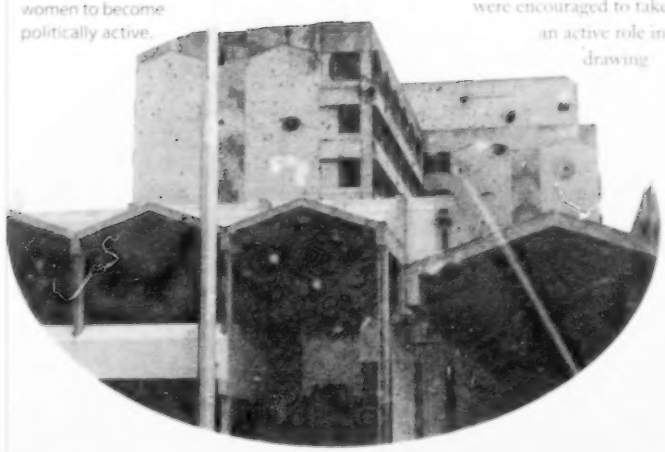
GDP per capita: $1,250

*Percent of GDP

Source: Human Development Report 2003

Right: Women make up 54 percent of Rwanda's population and have pushed for many reforms to improve the lives of women.

The bullet-riddled parliament building in Kigali still bears testament to the war. The war has prompted women to become politically active.



Athanasie Gahondogo, the Executive Secretary of the Forum for Rwandan Women Parliamentarians, a body that brings together women from the country's eight political parties with the aim of improving their status and heightening their profile, agreed. "The genocide has a lot to do with it in that women gained a very high profile afterwards," she says.

Today women and girls make up 54 percent of Rwanda's eight million people and 60 percent of the country's workforce.

The strong showing for women candidates at the polls was also due to a UNDP initiative, with US$1.5 million in funding from the Netherlands, to train women in decision-making positions, strengthen women's civil society organizations and establish governmental units to look after the concerns of women.

There was some direct aid provided in the campaign, with the programme assisting in logistical and transport costs during the campaign, but in the interests of obtaining a lasting impact, much of the aid was focused on funding projects aimed at making women more politically aware. This included a programme that UNDP, along with the Inter-Parliamentary Union, carried out in the immediate run-up to the elections to heighten women's awareness of the electoral process.

"Since the genocide we have contributed to the economic empowerment of women," says Berthilde Gahongayire, who is in charge of HIV and Gender issues at UNDP in Kigali. "And we played a major role in the high turnout of women candidates in the last election. We did a lot to enable them to dare to stand for election."

The programme also supported the Ministry of Gender and Promotion of Women, which launched a number of awareness campaigns aimed at sensitizing society as a whole to the advantages of fully involving women in decision-making.

Preparation also paid off. Across the country, women were encouraged to take an active role in drawing up the new constitution—the constitution that guaranteed them a minimum of 30 percent of National Assembly seats.

Genocide created need for new laws

According to Ms. Gahondogo, the precarious circumstances in which so many Rwandan women found themselves at the end of the genocide spurred them to campaign for new laws to change the law on succession of property—to allow women to inherit land from their husbands or fathers— and to stiffen the penalties for child rapists.

Ms. Gahondogo, a teacher from southern university town of Butare who grew up in exile in neighbouring Burundi, was elected in October to fill one of the seats

reserved for women. She believes that women parliamentarians should "serve as a model" for other women and that they should carefully review all the country's laws in search of legal provisions that discriminate against women.

"Had it not been for the genocide," she says, "Rwandan women would never have dared ask for succession rights."

Constance Mukayuhi, points out that women are not merely present in Parliament but also hold positions of responsibility and authority and head a number of technical committees. Rwanda's women legislators, she says, must strive to further improve their performance through training.

The women legislators say that it can sometimes be difficult to juggle home life and parliamentary duties, but no more so than it is to juggle home life and any professional obligations. Although she felt bad about spending little time with her two-year-old daughter during the campaign, Solange Tuvisenge, 32, says she always wanted to have an opportunity "to contribute something to our society."

Ms. Tuvisenge, who was elected to one of the reserved seats in the western Kibuye province, says "I want the women of Rwanda, from the rural poor to the urban elite, to be independent, to be educated. I want them to become peacemakers." ■

Helen Vesperini is a reporter for the Agence-France Press based in Kigali, Rwanda.

YOUTHS IN VENEZUELA SLUMS LEARN TO MONITOR HUMAN RIGHTS

Understanding rights is first step toward protecting rights

BY FABIOLA ZERPA

CARACAS, VENEZUELA

Until a short time ago, Saul thought that when the police harassed him verbally and physically, they were just doing their job. Glennys believed that her friends quit school just because they were lazy. Freddy believed that if someone was fired from his job without cause there was nothing to be done about it.

Now they, along with 10 other Venezuelan youth, know that these situations aren't normal.

Students in the human rights programme examined specific human rights in their barrios, such as the right to education, security and work.

Since March 2003, these young people from three poor neighbourhoods in Caracas have learned that a Universal Declaration of Human Rights protects them from the abuse that they used to consider an inevitable part of their daily lives.

These youths are participating in the Human Rights Observatory, a 12-month pilot project conducted by the Centre for Peace and Human Rights of the Central University of Venezuela, directed by sociologist Ana Maria Sanjuan with the support of UNDP. Last 10 December, International Human Rights Day, they graduated as expert monitors in reporting the obstacles that prevent the enjoyment of those rights in their communities.

According to Ms. Sanjuan, a comprehensive approach to human rights education for young people is crucial for strengthening justice and eradicating an authoritarian culture, especially in the economically depressed areas of the city. "The project objective is not just to train young people on human rights, but also to be able to appeal to the appropriate authorities," she explains.

Culture of repression

Human rights advocates and police officials agree that poverty and a culture of impunity have resulted in a history of human rights abuse in Venezuela. But that, they say, is changing.

According to Luz Patricia Mejia, Director of Legal Resources in the Office of the Ombudsman, unemployment is the most basic problem. "It has do to with police abuse and is closely related to a culture of state repression that criminalizes poverty." However, she adds, "Thanks to the new legal framework, we no longer see the police raids of the 80s and 90s. This culture has been declining."

Lazaro Forero, director of the Metropolitan Police says one of the main problems is the educational level of many police officers. "Often these are people who come from marginal neighbourhoods themselves, who have grudges against society for various personal reasons. Throughout their careers, we give them courses in human relations, human rights and new laws. Frequently, the abuse is perpetrated by low-ranking officers and not by their superiors, who have a career and identify with the police as an institution."

Relations between the police and the community in slum areas are tense but many say the culture of police impunity is declining.

Venezuela

AT A GLANCE

Population: 24.8 million

Area: 912,050 sq km

Human Development Ranking: 69 of 173 countries

Public expenditure on health: 2.7%*

Military expenditure: 1.5%*

Women in parliament: 9.7%

GDP per capita: $5,670

*Percent of GDP

Source: Human Development Report 2003

Supporting marginalized groups

According to the Venezuelan National Institute of Statistics, 54 percent of the country's households—almost three million families—are impoverished. This section of the population is often not afforded the same legally progressive view of human rights enshrined in the country's 1999 Constitution and young people are especially vulnerable.

"A large part of the social problems and difficulties in overcoming poverty in these communities have to do with injustice and the people's lack of confidence in institutions. The idea behind the project was to restore their credibility," Ms. Sanjuan adds.

The Centre for Peace was modelled after the Human Rights Observatory in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, established in 2000. Part of the job for the young people was to develop "Neighbourhood Maps," a type of biography and diagnostic of the public infrastructure of their communities. Out of this process their main task emerged: selecting a right that was of particular concern to the community and investigating the obstacles to the full enjoyment of that right.

The right to education

Jose Roberto Perez, 18, Waleska Mohamad, 16, and Glennys Guzman, 17, live in the barrio "Cañincito," relatively close to Caracas' city centre, and are all in their final year of high school. The three have studied a phenomenon that is close to them: school dropouts and their relationship to the right to education.

According to 2001 National Census data, there are 1.9 million children between the ages of three and 19 in Venezuela who are not attending school. "My group of friends quit school," reports Ms. Guzman. "At first I thought that was because they were lazy. But then I began to put things together. All of them got their girlfriends pregnant and had to find jobs. I also realized that they were taught about contraceptive methods very late in school. I understood that everything was based on education. We have problems because of ignorance."

Ms. Guzman managed to do something that she never expected—she got her friends to return to class.

According to Mr. Perez, economics is the main obstacle to education. "Many parents don't have money to buy school supplies," he explains, while Ms. Mohamad adds, "Others also drop out because they have problems with teachers and students, and others because they don't have the support of their parents."

With jobs hard to find, more than half of the Venezuelan workforce is employed in the informal sector. Here, youths with time to spare organize cockfighting matches.

Right to security

In the "70," the furtherest barrio from the city centre, the isolation has helped make it the most dangerous place, where armed gangs frequently settle their scores. The police only visit the community when there are incidents or to conduct investigations. These visits are often marked by arbitrary detention and searches and physical and verbal abuse. Weapons are often fired.

Provea, a Venezuelan NGO for the protection of human rights, states in its 2003 report that in the past year there had been regression in the right to life, especially at the hands of the State police forces. This reality is confirmed by the monitors in the "70," made up of Lisbeth Ramirez, 19, Saul Salazar, 25, Karelis Rojas and Yessi Guerrero, both 17, who explored the reasons for police violence against a background of the right to security.

"Most young people have been victims of police abuse," reports Mr. Salazar. "I've been mistreated by all the police units but one. They have shoved their guns in my face and held me down to demand information on some of my neighbours. I was afraid I was going to die. This was a reality that many kept silent about, but thanks to the project, now we talk about it. The police treat us with respect. Now I feel safe."

Ms. Guerrero says that as there is less fear in the community, more people are asking her how to report offences. She believes that excesses were committed because the police didn't know the regulations limiting their actions.

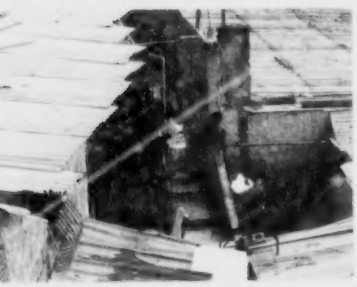
Security in the slums is a major concern, from both the police and criminals.

Right to work

The children of Bermudez are very familiar with the vicious cycle of unemployment, which the Venezuelan National Statistical Institute places at 16.7 percent—2.03 million people—and which the private companies say is 20.5 percent.

"Since we are young people with no work experience, nobody hires us. Another reason is that we haven't finished school. Many of us don't have money to go to school. We have to stay home with nothing to do. So how can we find good jobs?" asks Edwin Eduardo Rodriguez, a student in the last year of high school, 18 years old. Together with Dillinger Garboza, 15, Rosabel Calderon and Freddy Villarda, both 16, Mary Rosales, 21, and Leion Saez, 18, Mr. Rodriguez proposed that they should observe how young people's right to work is violated.

"I believe that the main cause of unemployment for youth is that we aren't receiving an adequate education," explains Mr. Rodriguez. "Therefore we don't have any experience, which is what counts." For many young people, the only work available is to take horse-racing bets, since the barrio is very close to a racetrack. They are part of the 5.2 million people, or 56 percent of the workforce, involved in the informal economy.



Caracas slums, often on the hillsides outside of town, offer little opportunity for youth.

Mr. Saez says "now I know that we all have the right to work and that if someone is fired, or has other problems with his rights, he can appeal to the Ombudsman Office."

Another problem related to unemployment is the lack of space for recreation, which leads to youth violence. Many, like Mr. Villarda, are afraid of dying young. "Sometimes I'm afraid. In these confrontations you could die from a stray bullet after a few words are exchanged. That's why I go to bed early at night," says Mr. Villarda.

The future in the classroom

Ms. Mejia, of the Ombusdperson Office, calls the project a very interesting effort in human rights education. "It really caught our attention that those young people had selected those rights, because they are the ones on which we receive the most complaints here. This is true for the right to work: 45 percent of complaints are in this area. This is the most abused right, by both private and public employers." Sonia Obregon, a UNDP programme officer on human rights, says the project has achieved its objectives. "The youths are highly motivated and perceive that their lives have changed. Now they want to continue their schooling." She hopes that the project will be continued and expanded in cooperation with the Ministry of Education to involve the school system. ■

Fabiola Zerpa is a reporter and editor on the International News Desk for El Nacional, *a Venezuelan newspaper.*

Left José Roberto Pérez, Glennys Guzmán and Waleska Mohamad in the barrio Canincito, who analysed the right to education.

LA NACION | S

Muertes con testigos

Since this article was prepared for CHOICES, the police, operating without a warrant, shot Kelvin Gonzalez in his home in the "70" barrio, suspecting him of murdering a policeman. According to newspaper accounts, Gonzalez, the father of four and brother of Karelis Gonzalez, a participant in the human rights project, had no connection to the murder.

NEW JUDICIAL REFORMS IN PHILIPPINES AIM TO ADDRESS NEEDS OF POOR

Better access to justice and information seen as key to a fair society

BY RED BATARIO

MANILA, PHILIPPINES

There is a 49-year-old man making a living doing odd jobs in and around Manila who is a fugitive from justice. More than 11 years ago, he escaped from his municipal detention cell in the Visayas islands. He was a *sacada*, a migrant worker employed seasonally by sugarcane plantations as a cane cutter who was accused of stealing P500 (about US$10) from his supervisor. Unable to post bail, he was sent to jail where he spent the next seven months waiting for trial.

"I thought they would keep me in jail forever. That's why I escaped," he says with downcast eyes.

Courtyard of a jail in Quezon City. Jails in the Philippines are overcrowded and inadequate.

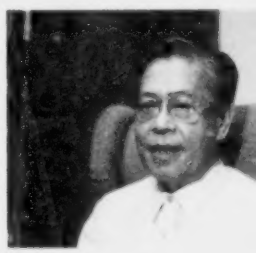
Below: Raymund Narag was imprisoned for seven years before he was acquitted in a murder case. Now he is assisting the court reform programme.

About 95 percent of prisoners in the Philippines are poor and penal conditions are, by all accounts, deplorable. The conditions that Raymund Narag, 29, endured in his seven years in prison are indelibly etched in his mind: cells crammed to the rafters, inmates suffering from various diseases, abominable food, and endless delays in court proceedings. When Mr. Narag stepped out of the Quezon City jail sometime in 2002, he was determined to do two things: work to improve penal conditions and win back the love of his girlfriend. Since recently marrying "the love of his life," he is now focused on prison reform.

Mr. Narag, who graduated cum laude with a degree in public administration before his incarceration, was one of five who were acquitted in the killing in 1994 of a rival fraternity member during a brawl on the campus of the University of the Philippines. But his first-hand experience behind bars has put him in a position to assist a new reform programme led by the Philippine Supreme Court and UNDP to identify and institute judicial reforms that will promote access to justice for the poor and disadvantaged.

Blueprint for reform

Away from the public eye, the Supreme Court has been leading the way in pursuing reforms in the judiciary that many see as an uphill battle given the intense politicking and public preoccupation with early campaigning in the run-up to the May 2004 elections. But the failed impeachment moves against Chief Justice Hilario G. Davide, Jr. in late 2003 that were widely perceived as politically motivated also demonstrated the public's ability to rally behind an institution perceived as the last bulwark of democracy.



Philippines Supreme Court Chief Justice Hilario G. Davide, Jr. has spearheaded an effort to overhaul the country's courts to improve the quality of justice and expand access.

Working a punishing 12-hour day that starts at 5:30 am, Chief Justice Davide hews to a vision that calls for a judiciary "that is independent, effective and efficient, and worthy of public trust and confidence; and a legal profession that provides quality, ethical, accessible and cost-effective legal service to our people and is willing and able to answer the call to public service."

"It is a vision shared by the court," Justice Davide says. "I just put it down in writing as my own guide, the idea being that reform should not only be a proposal or pursuit of the court for the justices but all those involved in the justice system."

"The UNDP grant," Justice Davide says, "helped us draw up what we now call the Blueprint of Action for the Judiciary to outline many of the reform proposals to be undertaken by the court during my tenure which should be

until 20 December 2005." The blueprint, he says, led the donor community to "provide us assistance in an overwhelming show of support."

Opening the judiciary to public scrutiny

The new reform effort has mobilized many sectors of the Philippines criminal justice system. In the cramped offices of the Sentro ng Alternatibong Lingap Panligal (SALIGAN), an alternative law group doing developmental legal work with farmers, workers, the urban poor, women, and local communities, Executive Director Marlon J. Manuel notes that although the reform efforts cannot be accomplished easily, he hopes that civil society groups, government officials, lawyers, law schools, the poor and marginalized "will develop a keen interest in those efforts."

"I see the reform initiatives as an opportunity for us," he says, to articulate the needs of the poor despite what he calls the enormity of the challenge in reforming the judiciary and the whole judicial system.

The reform initiative, according to Deborah Landey, UNDP Resident Representative in the Philippines, has provided the "baseline data" needed for guiding the Supreme Court's judicial reform agenda. "For the first time in the Court's history," she says, "the formulation of the Blueprint has opened the gates of the judiciary to public scrutiny and allowed reforms to take place."

"The variety of issues raised by the marginalized sectors on access to justice during the series of dialogues with court justices and judges," she says, "were critical in setting the reform priorities of the judiciary."

In the cramped offices of SALIGAN, Executive Director Marlon J. Manuel presides over a meeting on how alternative law groups like his can address the demand side of the country's justice reform programme especially in relation to empowering the poor.

Reducing prison overcrowding

Prison overcrowding is one of the most pressing issues. A 10-year-old study of over 600 jails in the country found that inmates in more than half of the institutions were deprived of the basic needs of food, shelter and living space, water and lighting, and the problem has attracted local lawyers.

The Integrated Bar of the Philippines, an organization of lawyers involved in providing legal assistance to the poor and the vulnerable, has set up a National Center for Legal Aid that assists in the legal requirements of indigents.

"Right now we have a pilot project funded by UNDP for jail decongestion in Quezon City and Pasig City that began last September and I am happy to say that as of today, we were able to release 42 from those two jails," says Victoria Gonzalez-De Los Reyes, Senior Deputy Director for legal aid of the bar association. Some of the released were found to be innocent while the rest, she says, were already beyond the imposable penalty but spent several months in prison because of the delay in the administration of justice.

According to Gerald V. Bernabe, programme manager of Caritas—Manila's Prison Justice and Development Program, 5,200 inmates are packed like sardines into the 1,800-capacity city jail, located next to a slum.

Through the prison programme, Caritas-Manila has been largely successful in attracting volunteers to join its prison ministry and to focus on the concept of Restorative Justice, which works to facilitate the reintegration of offenders back into the community after their release. The programme allows "sharers," people who can relate their own life experiences with the inmates, to visit the prison once a month.

Above: Victoria Gonzalez-De Los Reyes says 42 inmates, many who have served more time than their alleged crimes would warrant, have been released.

Left: A meeting of Caritas, an NGO working to reduce prison overcrowding.

Below: Inmates packed into cramped quarters in Quezon City jail.

Philippines

AT A GLANCE

Population: 77.2 million

Area: 300,000 sq km

Human Development Ranking: 85 of 173 countries

Public expenditure on education: 4.2%*

Public expenditure on health: 1.6%*

Military expenditure: 1.0%*

Women in parliament: 17.2%

GDP per capita: $3,840

*Percent of GDP

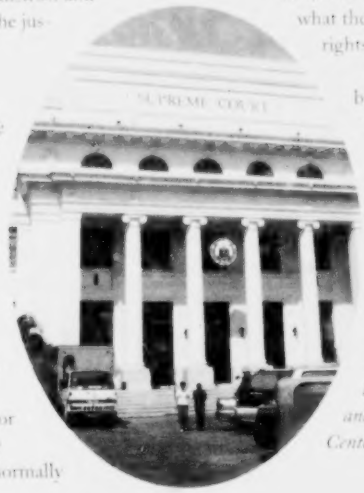
Source: Human Development Report 2003

Right: Evelyn Toledo-Dumdum, Director of the Supreme Court's Management Office.

Below: The Philippines Supreme Court building in Manila.

Widespread distrust of the system

A survey of detainees in Philippine jails showed that "a large percentage of inmates indicated that they are not aware of the appropriate procedures to follow upon detention" and found widespread distrust and low levels of confidence in the justice system.



The Public Attorney's Office says it is able to provide adequate and affordable access to justice for its poor clients despite financial constraints. But Evelyn Toledo-Dumdum, Director of the Program Management Office of the Supreme Court, says the bigger problem is that poor people just don't know their rights. "The court reforms are aimed at the poor and marginalized, especially women and children, who normally have difficulty because of their status in life and most of them, in fact, don't know what their rights are."

According to Ms. Landey, there are clear links between human rights and poverty reduction. "Our reform programme is only the beginning to remove obstacles and barriers to better access to justice by the poor and marginalized. There is also a clear link between human rights and good governance, and the extent to which human rights are protected in a country will not only depend upon the nature of government but also on the laws and quality of governing institutions." ■

Red Batario is a freelance journalist in the Philippines and is the Executive Director of the Manila-based Center for Community Journalism and Development.

Congo Legal Clinic Opens Doors for Poor

BRAZZAVILLE, REPUBLIC OF THE CONGO

When her husband died in 1999, Loutaya Agnès Sinda, a 65-year-old housewife and mother of seven children, was entitled to a pension of $101 per quarter. But she never received it and despite many visits to the National Social Security Bureau—which demanded payment for filing fees on several occasions—she could not receive her money. For four years, her only source of income was the generosity of her children and close relatives.

But at church one day she heard about a legal clinic that could help. The legal clinic was one of several that set up regular offices in the churches and markets of Brazzaville to provide free social and legal assistance to people that needed assistance through a UNDP-supported programme, "Justice and Human Rights," in partnership with the Ministry of Justice.

In addition to free social and legal assistance, these clinics offer assistance in obtaining documentation and information, raising awareness of legal rights and provide training, and mediation and legal support to women and children who are victims of violence. The clinics are intended to promote the emerging rule of law in the country and to address a longstanding lack of public confidence in public institutions and the justice system, in particular. Slowly, the legal clinics have been gaining "institutional recognition." The Court of First Instance of Brazzaville, in a hearing, cited and endorsed the conclusions of a precedent set by the legal clinic's mediation services.

When Mrs. Sinda sought free social and legal assistance at the legal clinic in March 2003, she met her caseworker, Copertinaud Mahoungou, who listened to the facts, wrote them down because Mrs. Sinda could not read or write, and collected the supporting documentation to open a file. Mr. Mahoungou, like all the caseworkers at the Legal Clinic, is a member of an association of young lawyers—most with law degrees but who are unemployed—who have been working in the field of legal access for over two years. After six months of negotiations with the head of the Office of Senior Citizens with the Social Security Fund, Mrs. Sinda began receiving her pension. In addition, she received pension arrears for three years amounting to $950. Mrs. Sinda has since referred other widows to the clinic. ■

Small legal clinics staffed by unemployed lawyers, help the poor secure their rights.

—By Guili Tsoumou, the Communications Officer in UNDP Republic of the Congo.

FIRST PERSON: A REPORTER'S JOURNEY TO AVOID HYPING HATE IN THE CÔTE D'IVOIRE PRESS

The International Tribunal for Rwanda recently convicted media executives at Radio Television Libre des Mille Collines, a Rwanda radio station that promoted hate and violence with messages "for a final war" and to "exterminate the cockroaches," before and during the genocide that claimed 800,000 lives. To avoid a replay of the horrors in Rwanda, Geneva-based Media Action International, together with UNDP, invited reporters in Côte d'Ivoire to a workshop on peacebuilding in April 2003 including Parfait Kouassi of the daily *24 Heures*. This is his account of how he tries to cover events.

ABIDJAN, CÔTE D'IVOIRE

The seminar on peace which I attended prompted me to rethink some of my basic journalistic principles. During the four years of my professional career, I realized that most journalists, including myself, tended to liberally quote political speeches, including the ones most likely to cause conflict. For over a decade, political debate in Côte d'Ivoire has been saturated with this type of reporting and newspapers often go to extraordinary efforts to put them on the front page. What I learned from the *Mille Collines* episode has led me to understand how much journalists can contribute to the spread of hatred in the hearts of the people dispensed by shady politicians.

Just a few days after the armed conflict broke out in the country, a dignitary of the ruling party, the Front Populaire Ivoirien, was working to whip up the nationalist fervour of Ivorians by suggesting the theory of "an unjustified attack from outside" against Côte d'Ivoire. The allusion was to its neighbour, Burkina Faso, and the theme was picked up by some in the media. Soon pictures of a soldier sporting a T-shirt decorated with a star—found on the Burkina Faso flag—embedded in the tri-colour Ivorian flag were published continuously to validate the theory that Burkina Faso was involved.

In several cases, such as after the murder of the Radio France Internationale journalist Jean Hélène or after the alleged attack on national television headquarters last December, the news is always manipulated. The efforts of some independent and opposition newspapers to responsibly reconstruct the reality of the events were swamped by the flood of xenophobic and hate-filled articles.

I decided to turn my back on that kind of "journalism" and to involve myself, in the context of the political and military crisis Côte d'Ivoire is going through, with a greater emphasis on the suffering of the people. To do that, I had to challenge my prejudices.

After Ivorian leaders signed the Linas-Marcoussis peace agreement in France at the end of January 2003 outside of Paris, travel within Côte d'Ivoire was again possible, and I visited areas under rebel control. This new climate helped foster a willingness to accept a culture of tolerance and I began reevaluating the words I use in my articles. For example, to bypass the sensitivities of these various armed groups and also avoid dramatizing the information, I now call the former rebels "the new forces," the loyalist forces "national armed forces," and the militias "young patriots." I don't ally myself with an armed group which can guarantee my protection, but rather, I take refuge in the belief that scrupulous respect for the principles of journalistic ethics and professional integrity alone will be my shield.

We reporters are in constant danger. In October 2002, Communications Minister Sery Bailly invited editors to support the regime of the President but warned "what you write will ensure your safety." The newspapers which did not respond to this intimidation, were ransacked (*Le Patriote*, *Le Jour* and *24 Heures*) and journalists received death threats (*Le Nouveau Réveil*). Today, intimidation takes a new form. Reporters are often threatened in their offices or denied access to press conferences at the Presidential Palace.

Parfait Kouassi, reporter for *24 Heures*, conducting an interview in the field.

I am always fearful when I write that I will make a mistake that could increase tensions. Since I work for a daily that has built a good reputation for its credibility during the armed conflict, I have set such rigourous standards for myself that it now takes me three times longer to draft an article than it did before. I am extremely careful to verify information. God only knows how many obstacles have to be faced to get hold of it. And I believe that it is up to the reader to form an opinion, so I limit myself to reporting the facts, just the facts, and avoid mixing opinions with the factual story. ■

Parfait Kouassi is a reporter for the newspaper "24 Heures" and is based in Abidjan.

EFFICIENT SERVICE FROM REVAMPED FINANCE MINISTRY TAKES LEBANESE BY SURPRISE

Fiscal reform helps make it easier to do business

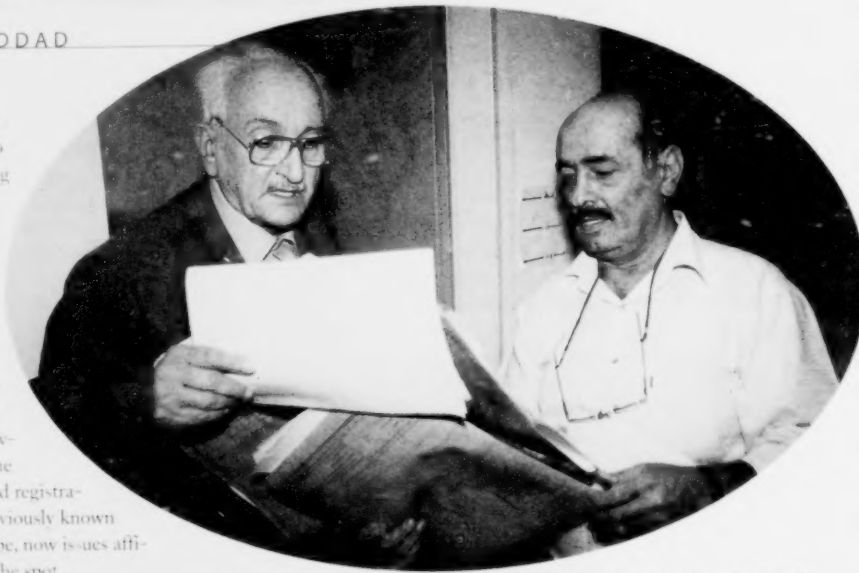
BY REEM HADDAD

BEIRUT, LEBANON

There are some Lebanese who are still finding it hard to believe that Beirut Customs—once notorious for its bureaucratic nightmare and chaotic procedures—is providing some of the most efficient government service in the country. And the land registration department, previously known for its tedious red tape, now issues affidavits and maps on the spot.

"I'll never believe it," says Fouad Balha, a 70-year-old physician residing in Beirut. "I can't believe that a department in the Lebanese Government can ever be efficient."

Beirut Customs used to be a nightmare but is now regarded as one of the most efficient government services.



Fouad Balha used to have to pay someone to wait in line for land maps and affidavits from the Ministry of Finance's Land Registration department. Since the department computerized, he gets his documents by himself.

Like many other Lebanese, Mr. Balha hires an intermediary—*samsar* in Arabic—to do the legwork at the ministries. For his work, the *samsar* then charges his clients a hefty fee. But today Mr. Balha can do much of the work himself—at least at the Ministry of Finance—and cut out the cost of the *samsar*.

Only eight years ago, it seemed as if time had stopped at the Ministry of Finance. All information was handwritten on paper, some already yellowing with age. Transparency was nonexistent. And getting any information from the ministry was a lengthy nightmare. The entire government budget was calculated and entered into an oversized ledger, statistics were unheard of and computers nonexistent. A story has it that an incoming minister couldn't even find a calculator.

The 16-year civil war also took its toll on the Ministry. Various departments had been scattered around the country, many of its buildings had been shelled, files had been burned and information was lost. With a struggling economy and a spiraling debt, the country was in desperate need of a functioning ministry.

"The whole government was in shambles," says Randa Aboul-Hosn, a UNDP policy specialist who participated in an eight-year project that has helped Lebanon reform its Finance Ministry. "It was a priority for UNDP to support Lebanon's comeback to the world map and that would not have been possible without our joint project."

With a US$22 million loan from the World Bank, $650,000 from UNDP as well as funding from other donors including the International Monetary Fund and the European Union, the project for fiscal reform and improved management began in 1995, four years after the end of the war. Attention was focused on the Finance ministry and its departments, including the real estate sector, which accounts for about $6 billion of the country's economy, and Customs, which brings in $1 billion in annual revenues.

Land maps can be printed on demand.

"The Ministry of Finance has to play the role of engine for the reconstruction of the Lebanese economy and the management of the economic policy of the government," says Jihad Azour, UNDP Project Director and adviser to the Ministry. But for starters, fiscal reforms had to be enacted, economic policies changed, budget systems revamped and taxes re-introduced. All items had to be compliant with international standards.

To implement the changes, the entire Ministry, including customs and land registration branches, had to be fully automated. In a bid to be transparent, the Ministry went on line and for the first time provided statistics, tax information, public debt information, fiscal reports and tax and registration forms.

"One of the main developments over the last 10 years has been the improvement of the level of information at the ministry and now we can provide extensive information to users," says Mr. Azour.

With the ministry's automation well under way, the government was ready to begin implementing its tax reform plans by 2001. A 10 percent value added tax, or VAT, was introduced to stem the growth of the country's budget deficit, which had ballooned to over $30 billion.

Instead of vast storage areas for documents, land records are all on computers.

At the Customs department, chaos initially greeted UNDP's Project Manager Salim Balaa. It literally took 11 steps and two weeks before goods could be cleared from customs, many of which entailed endless inspections by officers.

An antiquated system of tariffs, "which usually required a lot of mental gymnastics to figure out," says Mr. Balaa, were replaced by the international harmonized system of tariffs. Soon after, a project to automate Lebanon's customs process, known as NAJM, was launched to facilitate the country's international trade.

"NAJM made sure that Lebanese laws and regulation were applied uniformly all over the country, that costs and time of procedures were reduced, and accurate and fast international trade statistics could be provided," says Mr. Balaa.

As part of NAJM, customs computers were installed and equipped with internationally recognized software and the big multi-coloured bulky cardboard papers previously used as forms were replaced by the global standard, the International Single Administrative Document. These forms have since been translated into Arabic and now are used in many Arab countries.

Inside customs, where computerized tariffs and a streamlined inspection system has cut waiting times in half.

Since 2001, traders or Customs brokers have the option of entering and tracking their customs declarations on line and about 50 percent of all declarations are now submitted through the Internet. Trade brokers, like Hala Sibini, have been able to cut down on time spent at customs.

"Before automation we had to wait days for things to move along," she said as she waited for a Customs' officer to call out her number in queue. "And there is late fee for goods kept here more than four days. And of course, I had to pass on this fee to my customers who got angry. The whole system was ridiculous."

The new system has not only reduced the time it takes for goods to clear customs—from an average of six days in 1997 to 3.5 days in 2001—it has also allowed new businesses to start up.

Lebanon

AT A GLANCE

Population: 3.5 million

Area: 10,400 sq km

Human Development Ranking: 83 of 173 countries

Public expenditure on education: 3.0%*

Military expenditure: 5.5%*

Women in parliament: 2.3%

GDP per capita: $4,170

*Percent of GDP

Source: Human Development Report 2003

Almost all records that used to be recorded only in books are now in computer databases.

"People seem more interested in starting their own businesses now that the customs department is working efficiently," says Antoine Moukrazal, the Chief Controller at Beirut Customs. "Speed and efficiency play a huge role for businesses."

Computerized land records

A sign in the land registration building—known as the Cadastre—states that "Affidavits will be issued the same day," a sure indication that times are changing.

While the land registration department was one of the few government systems that continued to operate during the civil war, the system "was overloaded," says Raghda Jaber, the UNDP project coordinator of the Cadastre project. "Property rights were all recorded but the means of recording was paper and ink, which made it very vulnerable."

While fires during the war burned some of the maps and documents, the bigger damage was the natural disintegration of documents with time. "And this is a disaster because deterioration changes dimensions," says Ms. Jaber.

Citizens had to wait for days before receiving documents—and many of those days were spent running around to various government institutions trying to track lost information. Worse yet, if a file was lost, a court order is needed to reconstruct it. Documents were also conveniently "lost."

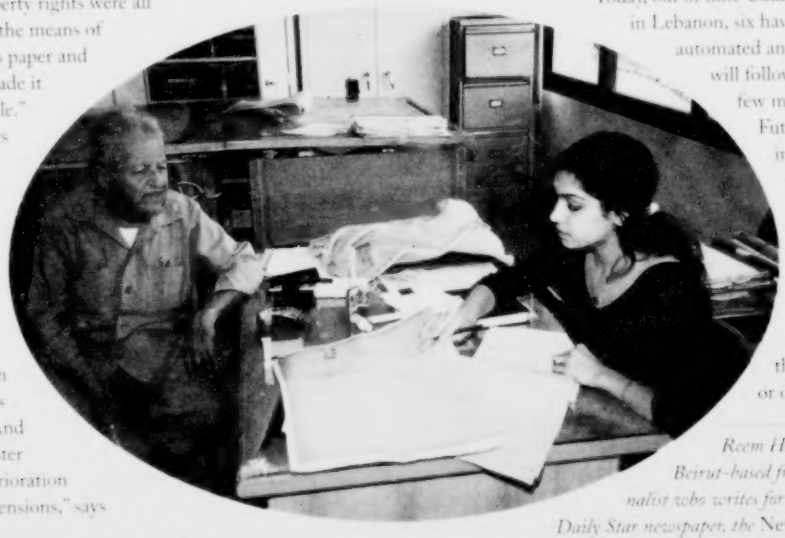
Files were everywhere—on the floors, on chairs or tucked away in closets. Over two million files containing eight million pages had to be entered into a database. It took 150 people four years to enter the information into a database. Another 300,000 files still have to be entered.

Employees now have to be trained to use the new system—not an easy task considering that many had never even touched a computer. But the savings have been impressive. Two years ago, Beshara Abou Zeid said it would take a week to complete 40 transactions. "Now I do that much in three hours."

The move has pleased and surprised clients, who can, in fact, receive their affidavits on the spot. "I never thought automation would happen here," says Salim Harb, who owns a real estate company and has been coming regularly to the Cadastre for several years. "I don't have to spend my time going back and forth anymore and getting frustrated. It's great."

Maps are also quickly procured, an aid to builders and developers. "We used to get maps the same day but it was such a hassle," recalls Maan Nassereddine, an engineer. "I had to go and come back so many times. Now my work is going much more efficiently."

Today, out of nine Cadastre offices in Lebanon, six have been automated and the rest will follow suit in a few months. Future plans include going online enabling citizens to view their papers or maps from their homes or offices. ■



Improved customer service at the Land Registration department ensures that most requests are filled on the same day.

Reem Haddad is a Beirut-based freelance journalist who writes for Lebanon's Daily Star newspaper, the New Internationalist *and has previously written for CHOICES.*

A HARBINGER OF DECENTRALIZATION: LOCAL TAJIK GROUPS SET THEIR OWN AGENDA

Building a system that allows people to solve their own problems

BY GULCHEHRA MANSUROVA

GHARM, TAJIKISTAN

When the first winter frost hits the Rasht valley in central Tajikistan, the Ibragimov brothers' workshop in the centre of town becomes a busy place. Rustam and Jalol Ibragimov make chimneys for home heating stoves, a necessity during the long cold winter when the snow cover can rise to as high as 1.5 metres.

Rustam and Jalol Ibragimov, like many other men in this region, are former combatants in the country's civil war and fought for several years with the United Tajik Opposition. Like hundreds of other combatants, the brothers returned to their homes after the government and the opposition signed a UN-brokered peace accord in 1997 in Moscow. The long hoped-for peace ended almost five years of battle that took the lives of some 50,000 people, most of them civilians.

While reluctant to share their war stories with strangers, the Ibragimovs are proud to show their workshop. It was, after all, a triumph to set up a small business venture in the valley, and in a country where more than 80 percent of the population lives below the poverty line and where one in every four households reports that a member of the family has looked for work outside the nation's borders, according to the International Organization for Migration.

With no start-up capital of their own, the Ibragimovs could not look to the State for subsidies or to commercial banks for loans. The situation seemed hopeless, but help came from a novel source. A newly created Jamoat Development Committee, composed of village representatives, decided to provide the Ibragimovs with the credit that allowed them to buy the shop, equipment and materials to start up the business.

Photo: Asad Ismi/UNDP

According to Ziyoratsho Sadulloyev, chairman of Nurabad District Development Committee, as many as 5,800 former Tajik military opposition fighters have participated in UNDP supported projects in the Rasht valley. Working with the former opposition commanders, UNDP was able to gain the trust of many ex-combatants. The reintegration programme has provided on-the-job training as bricklayers, carpenters, and other crafts. "They've become productive citizens again," says Mr. Sadulloyev. "They gave up their weapons and now they are working to rebuild."

Meeting the needs of the people

To promote dialogue and local initiative, UNDP assisted in starting the Jamoat Development Committees. A new phenomenon for the Rasht valley, as well as for all of Tajikistan, the committees consist of elected representatives of the villages, farmers, elders, and civic leaders, and the Committee works with the jamoat—the lowest governance level in Tajikistan. While the chairman of the local jamoats is appointed by the central authorities, the chairs of the committees are elected by secret ballot. There are presently 68 Jamoat Development Committees operating in the

Above: Rustam and Jalol Ibragimov, like many other men in this region, are former combatants in the country's civil war. With a loan from the local Jamoat Development Committee, they have started a successful business making chimneys for heating stoves.

Left: The covered market in Gharm, a major attraction in the valley, was the result of a programme to reintegrate former combatants into civilian society.

Tajikistan

AT A GLANCE

Population: 6.1 million

Area: 143,100 sq km

Human Development Ranking: 113 of 173 countries

Public expenditure on education: 2.1%*

Public expenditure on health: 0.9%*

Military expenditure: 1.2%*

Women in parliament: 12.4%

GDP per capita: $1,170

*Percent of GDP

Source: Human Development Report 2003

Saidkhuji Pirov, Kaznok Jamoat Chairman, leading committee meeting. The Jamoat members are all members of the local community.

country. People call the committees the "first swallows of the spring of Tajik local governance reform."

The Komsomolobad Jamoat Development Committee evaluates the uppermost needs of the population, according to Chairperson Asomiddina Akobirova. For example, she says, the timber that is cut for export in the area is far too expensive for local use, so the community decided to start a nursery of California poplars—which grow much faster than the local variety and has significantly helped prevent land erosion.

The committees manage small revolving funds to support income generation of vulnerable households; widows, elderly and families with one breadwinner. In Kaznok, on the suggestion of the Chairperson of the Women's Council, Kurbonghul Khalilova, the local committee issued a loan for US$1,000 for launching a sewing shop which today produces traditional clothing, dresses and headdresses. The women employed at the workshop earn relatively good salaries and support themselves and their families.

The Tajik national dress. A sewing shop, started with a loan from the local committee, provides jobs for women in Kaznok.

Proposals aimed at creating jobs are welcome, according to Saidkhuji Pirov, Kaznok Jamoat Chairman, who notes that for every villager receiving small loans, jobs for five to 15 people are created. So far, 21 projects have been implemented in Kaznok with financial support from UNDP. Two health posts and four schools, high priorities for the community, have been rehabilitated with the money earned from the repayment of loans.

Filling a governance vacuum

The war had dashed hopes that the country would move quickly to a market economy and democracy. The traditionally tight control of the central government in Dushanbe was weakened but no power or resources was delegated to local governments to fill the gap and provide services formerly managed by central government. There was a need to try new approaches to avoid a growing frustration at local level.

"The local authorities were entirely without economic support from the central government and have had to face a whole bunch of social and economic problems," according to Afgon Abdujaborov, chairman of the Navdi village committee. International NGOs and the UN specialized agencies have helped, he says, but he adds that they could not continue to rely on assistance forever.

Horses are still a major means of transportation in an area where poverty is widespread.

The Jamoat Development Committees are a new and essential component of UNDP's effort to support inclusive governance at the local level. UNDP has organized training for the Committees on issues ranging from managing funds to assessing priority needs of the villages.

Yakubjon Khalikov, the UNDP national area manager based in Gharm, says the Jamoat Development Committees are like unique laboratories of democracy. People learn the "alphabet of democracy" based on their own experience, he says, and the committees give people a chance to feel their affiliation and significance in decision making on the local level.

According to Ms. Seppo, one of the goals of the programme is to assist the communities to get back on their feet using all means and tools available and looking at none of them in isolation. The reintegration programme supported not only the ex-combatants but also the war-torn communities through small-scale infrastructure rehabilitation. The planning and priority setting for the rehabilitation work supported a process of partnership building, improved accountability and dialogue through the Jamoat and District Development Committees. "We see today a process that offers valuable lessons learnt for the local governance reform process in the country and for reintegration processes in other countries coming out of war," she says.

The imposing mountains that surround Tajikistan's Rasht Valley mask the deep poverty and lack of opportunities of its people.

Next steps toward decentralization

The Jamoat Development Committees have provided a glimpse of how local communities could seize the initiative, but true decentralization, in terms of elected bodies at local level with decision-making power and resources, has yet to take place in Tajikistan.

In May 2002, a President's working group was established to draft new laws on local governance. UNDP has supported a round of consultations in the different regions of Tajikistan on proposals for the new laws.

Khalifabobo Khamidov, Minister of Justice and chair of the working group, says a new legal framework is needed to implement the reforms in the country. Old Soviet clichés must be overcome, he says, including the belief that there is no trust in local power and that the Centre must dictate all decisions.

"The purpose of the President's working group is to establish a system which would allow the people to solve local problems independently." In that way, he says, "the people could cope with their business themselves within the framework of law." ■

Gulchehra Mansurova is a freelance journalist based in Dushanbe, Tajikistan, who writes extensively about Central Asia.

Local Governments in Poland Work to Map Future

TRZEBINIA, POLAND

Jobs disappeared when the local coal mine shut down in this town in Malopolska, a southern region, where one out of five people is jobless. But the town is retooling now, and within a few years, Trzebinia and the Malopolska region may be the most technologically advanced in Poland.

The "Malopolska Gateway," will help the region become an innovative centre of a knowledge-based society. "The project will enable ordinary people and the community to deal with the administration electronically instead of going 50 km to Cracow an average of four times, on leave from work to obtain one certificate," says Ryszard Rutkowski, Director of the regional office responsible for the project.

The Trzebinia project, submitted to the European Union for financing, will be a local component of the regional "Malopolska Gateway." On 1 May, when Poland joins the European Union, three billion Euros will flow into the country for development, infrastructure and human resource at the regional level. But unlike Trzebinia, most local governments are not well prepared for the increased assistance. Local communities have not rushed to turn in their applications and by the end of last November, few of Poland's 2,800 local authorities had applied for funding.

Responsible spending at the local level is a priority for the government and UNDP has been supporting efforts that help local governments identify the areas where they must concentrate improvements. Through a programme for South-Eastern Poland, a sustainable development audit uses indicators promoted by the European Commission and the United Nations system to analyse current levels of government services in unemployment, health care, transportation, education and public services. The audit has been conducted in more than 100 local communities all over Poland.

In addition to the audits and support centres, UNDP has also helped introduce mechanisms to implement development strategies, such as the innovative "Fund for Plock," a $325,000 fund established by the City of Plock, PKN ORLEN—the biggest oil company in Poland—Levi Strauss and UNDP. The funds help local NGOs and community organizations implement projects in line with sustainable development. The successful experiences in Plock are to be used in Trzebinia and Krosno as part of the Sustainable Development Programme for South-Eastern Poland. ■

—By Jan Szczyciński, the Communications Officer in UNDP Poland.

Above: With an unemployment rate of more than 20 percent, mostly due to a closed coal mine, the town is looking for other development opportunities to become an innovative centre of knowledge-based society.

Left: Unemployed Trzebinia resident illegally digs coal.

AFGHANIS TRADING AK-47S AND ROCKETS FOR CIVILIAN JOBS

Ex-combatants returned everything from AK-47s to rocket launchers.

BY CHERIE HART

KABUL, AFGHANISTAN

Against a striking backdrop of snow-capped mountains in a dry field on the western outskirts of Kabul, 200 Afghan soldiers and officers handed in their weapons in exchange for the promise of a new civilian life. These once active members of the First Division of the 597th regiment of the Afghan Military Force lined up in formation, heard inspirational speeches from their ex-commanders, and then willingly turned in their arms.

Placed neatly in rows on brightly coloured carpets, the nearly 200 AK-47s, rocket launchers, grenade launchers and range of other arms, resembled a display at an outdoor bazaar. Yet these goods were not for sale. They would head directly to a government depot where they would be locked tight under the supervision of the Ministry of Defense and an International Observer Group.

Assortment of weapons collected in the disarmament programme.

This January event was part of Afghanistan's national disarmament programme, the main component being the Disarmament, Demobilization, and Reintegration project—commonly known as "DDR," run by UNDP, in cooperation with the national Ministry of Defense. Known as "Afghanistan's New Beginnings Programme," the initiative has six pilot projects in eight regions throughout the country. Its aim is to disarm 100,000 registered soldiers and officers of the Afghan Military Forces, the various groups of armed soldiers often referred to as under the control of 'warlords' while a new "Afghan National Army" is created.

Japan is the leading financial backer of this three-year US$150 million effort, with substantial contributions also coming in from Canada and the United Kingdom, and pledges from the United States.

"The failure of DDR is not an option," says Ercan Murat, UNDP Resident Representative in Afghanistan. "For success of the voter registration, elections and long-term reconstruction and development of Afghanistan, the continuous progress of DDR is condition number one. It is not only a matter of removing fire power, it is also an issue of building confidence and opening up the possibility of peaceful negotiations in conflict areas. Laying down weapons leaves room for discussion and resolution."

Two or three days after turning in their arms, a new life begins. Soldiers take an oath that they will follow a Code of Conduct as good civilians. They are presented a medal for their dedication to the resistance, and a certificate of honourable discharge. Depending on their rank, they are given food and $100-$450.

Two to three weeks later, they meet with their assigned case workers to discuss their skills, aspirations and goals. Employment and training opportunities include wage labour in construction, small-business enterprises, de-mining, or agricultural packages for those returning to their farms. These packages include seeds, fertilizer and tools. Early discussions are underway with a range of ministries to seek new areas of work for these former soldiers and officers. One possibility is that the Ministry of Education will be using the most educated ones as teachers to fill the severe shortage of them in Afghanistan.

Zainullah Buddin, 26, spent five of his eight years as a soldier fighting against the Taliban. "It is time to put the guns away," he says. "I want to work with my uncle who is a pharmacist. I want to learn how to set up a small business to import medicines from Iran into Afghanistan. That is what is needed here."

Shah Pur has been a soldier since he was 15 years old. Now, at the age of 23, he is ready for a fresh start. "I want to be a tailor," he says. "I have the skills and I am really very happy to turn in my weapon."

To date, more than 2,300 soldiers have turned in their weapons under the DDR scheme. "They get immediate benefits of money, food and promise of a job in which they will get paid," says Paul Cruickshank, Operation Manager for DDR. "Many of these soldiers have not been paid for months." Whether they turn in their weapons for a new life in a classroom, on a farm, or in a shop, the general mood of the soldiers in the 597th Regiment was that they are tired of fighting. Now they have hope of a new beginning. ■

Cherie Hart is the UNDP Regional Communications Adviser for Asia and the Pacific.

LIBERIA CHARTING NEW COURSE FOR REBUILDING A NATION

BY CASSANDRA WALDON

MONROVIA, LIBERIA

The lush countryside seen from the air betrays the extent of the destruction on the ground in this country that has seen almost 14 years of constant civil strife. The destruction is seemingly complete—there is little left of any value.

I had come to Liberia on a short mission to help the UNDP office in Liberia develop a communications strategy that would allow the world, and Liberians, the opportunity to know about efforts to rebuild the country. Those efforts will be formidable and intensive, but there is hope.

One ex-combatant, a 19-year-old young woman, told me that she hoped to turn over a new leaf. As her 18-month-old daughter clung to her legs, I asked why she had come to the camp on this day. "I want to learn a trade. I want to learn batik," she said, referring to the tie-dye fabric treatment popular in the region.

People are ready to begin. At the Ministry of Information, employees still report to work, even though they may not have been paid in months. But they have little to work with—there are no desks, no telephones or pencils, let alone computers and fax machines.

The civil war had reversed development gains, decimated government infrastructure and disrupted the lives of Liberia's people—three-quarters of whom now live on less than US$1 a day. Liberia had become the international poster child of failed states.

The August signing of a peace agreement halted the conflict, while the installation of C. Gyude Bryant's civilian government last October moved the country farther away from war. And Liberia took its first hopeful steps into the global spotlight again, this time as representatives of international organizations, donor governments and NGOs gathered at the United Nations in New York to discuss how to help Liberia get back on its feet.

All told, Liberia needs $488 million for the next two years to start the process. The United States has pledged $200 million for reconstruction—in addition to its peacekeeping contribution—and the European Union has announced a $120 million pledge.

There are an estimated 53,000 ex-combatants in the country, many of them young men, women and children, and as I saw, the task of reintegrating them into society after so many years of civil war will not be easy. As the blazing sun relentlessly beat down one afternoon last December, hundreds of these combatants lined up just inside the boundaries of Camp Schieffelin, a military camp 35 miles outside of the country's capital, to rejoin society. Some had only the clothes on their backs and many still had AK-47s strapped to their bodies.

Ex-combatants, many just teenagers, wait to turn in their arms in return for cash and an opportunity to learn a skill.

The rag tag group of soldiers, most who looked as though they belonged in junior high school, waited in long lines to hand in their weapons of all types and ammunition. In return, the soldiers were to receive $75 and a fresh start as a first step in the complex process leading to reintegration. All around were blue-helmeted United Nations Peacekeepers, who will number 15,000 by March, making it the UN's largest operation of this kind.

It was hardly a given that things would go smoothly for the opening of Camp Schieffelin, where they would hand over their weapons. The tension was obvious, on the faces of both the soldiers and the peacekeepers. After a short ceremony, Jacques Paul Klein, Special Representative of the UN Secretary-General and C. Gyude Bryant, Chairman of the National Transitional Government of Liberia, symbolically destroyed the weapons that they received from two ex-combatants with a sledge hammer.

But it was not long after the ceremony that it became clear just how shaky peacebuilding would be in Liberia. With far more ex-combatants arriving than expected, the tension erupted into sporadic violence that spread into Monrovia, the only way these former fighters could express their discontent.

As I left the capital for Roberts International Airport via an UNMIL helicopter, and not by road due to security concerns, I was reminded of Mr. Bryant's words at the Camp Schieffelin ceremony: "We expected that there would be hurdles and hurdles there will be." He added, "This is a time for renewal, this is a time for redemption, this is a time for unity and I ask you to get on board." ■

Liberians symbolically destroying weapon that was used in 14-year civil war that was turned in at demobilization ceremony.

Cassandra Waldon is a Communications Specialist in UNDP New York.

1. Eradicate extreme poverty and hunger

As World Food Production Increases, So Does the Number of Hungry

BY DANIEL SHEPARD

Hunger perpetuates poverty, since it prevents people from realizing their potential and contributing to the progress of their societies...

There are some 800 million people in developing countries, or 18 percent of the world's population, who suffer from hunger.

There are 200 million children under the age of five who are underweight due to a lack of food.

But the world is producing more food now than ever before. Since the early 1970s, food production has tripled, more than enough to keep up with the world's population growth. And it is cheaper than ever, with the prices of major cereals falling by about 76 percent—if people are able to buy it. If this food were distributed equally around the world, everyone would be able to consume a diet of 2,760 calories a day. But that food is not reaching everyone.

Hunger is defined as a diet consisting of less than 2,000 calories a day, and according to a recent report by the Food and Agriculture Organization, the number of chronically hungry has crept back up to almost 800 million people after having decreased in the early 1990s. Hunger is most prevalent in South Asia, where India has 233 million hungry, but hunger there is declining. China still has 119 million people who are hungry, but 80 million Chinese have escaped hunger during the last decade. In Latin America, 53 million suffer from hunger and in the Arab States, 32 million. It is, however, growing in sub-Saharan Africa where 183 million people, or one-third of the population, is considered undernourished.

According to UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan, hunger and poverty are closely linked. "Hunger perpetuates poverty, since it prevents people from realizing their potential and contributing to the progress of their societies. Hunger makes people more vulnerable to diseases. It leaves them weak and lethargic, reducing their ability to work and provide for their dependents. The same devastating cycle is repeated from generation to generation—and will continue to be, until we take effective action to break it."

Most of the world's hungry live in rural areas in developing countries. About half live on farms in marginal areas where environmental degradation severely limits food production. Up to 10 percent of the hunger is caused by natural disasters, including droughts and floods. Hunger is also caused by poor food distribution policies, by historically low levels of investment in agricultural development and by a lack of money on the part of many poor countries to buy food. Hunger is rising in the cities as well, where the urban poor now account for more than one-fifth of the hungry. With urban migration on the rise, the hunger situation in the cities is expected to worsen. ■

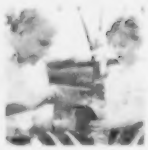
Daniel Shepard is Editor, CHOICES.

PREVALENCE OF STUNTING AMONG CHILDREN UNDER FIVE

The global map shows the prevalence of stunting as a measure of the chronic undernutrition among children under five years of age. Stunting is basically a measure of whether children are the right height for their age. It reflects the long-term cumulative effects of inadequate food intake and poor health conditions as a result of a lack of hygiene and recurrent illness in a poor and unhealthy environment. The prevalence of chronic undernutrition is a significant measure of endemic poverty and is a better indicator of poverty than estimates of per capita income.

Source: United Nations Food and Agriculture Organization

Working together for a better world-



With operations in over 60 countries, Alcan Inc. is a global leader in aluminum and packaging, as well as aluminum recycling. We are also recognized as one of the world's leaders in promoting sustainability as a business management concept. At Alcan, we view sustainability not as a destination but as a journey of learning and change.

We firmly believe that our success as a global company is directly linked to our actions both inside and outside our operations.

This belief underlies our creation of the **Alcan Prize for Sustainability – a US$1 million prize to be awarded annually to a not-for-profit, non-governmental organization to honour outstanding contributions in the areas of economic, environmental, and social sustainability.**

The Alcan Prize for Sustainability recognizes the critical role of the not-for-profit sector in promoting and implementing sustainable development around the world. It also recognizes that all sectors of society have a role to play in preserving our planet for future generations ... and that we play those roles most effectively when we work together.

To learn more about the Alcan Prize for Sustainability and how to apply, please visit **alcanprizeforsustainability.com**

Alcan
Prize
for Sustainability

ALCAN

In association with the International Business Leaders Forum

GLOBAL ACTORS NEED A GLOBAL STAGE

Advertise in CHOICES

Unstable and insecure times like this demand action. Building democracy, reducing poverty, establishing prosperity. For global actors who are part of the solution, there is one stage where attention is guaranteed—CHOICES.

CHOICES is the magazine that development experts and decision makers read. Everywhere. From Mexico to Madagascar. To reach the experts throughout the world, you need to advertise in CHOICES.

No other magazine details the successes of human development like CHOICES. And no other magazine is seen by as varied an audience as CHOICES, from the rich and powerful to the weak and voiceless.

Be a global actor. Advertise in CHOICES.
For more information, call 212-906-5325 or e-mail choices@undp.org.

CHOICES

THE HUMAN DEVELOPMENT MAGAZINE

UNDP Report Finds Disaster Losses Are Not Inevitable

WASHINGTON, DC

Development can make disasters more—or less—deadly according to a new UNDP report launched here last month that maps out global trends in exposure, risk and vulnerability to natural disasters and shows the relationship between natural disasters and development.

Billions of people in more than 100 countries are periodically exposed to at least one earthquake, tropical cyclone, flood or drought. These disasters cause, on average, 184 deaths per day.

During the two decades monitored, 1980-2000, Armenia, the Democratic People's Republic of Korea (DPRK), Ethiopia, Honduras and Sudan were the five countries with the highest number of inhabitants killed in natural disasters in relation to their total population. The DPRK had the highest annual death rate per million inhabitants, caused by natural disasters (606), followed by Mozambique (328), Armenia (324), Ethiopia (324) and Sudan (275).

Disaster mitigation experts point out that the death toll resulting from natural disasters is only the tip of the iceberg. The economic impact, combined with the human toll, can be devastating for populations that are already living on the margins of society.

Globally, disasters caused more than US$660 billion in damage during the 1990s. But the majority of these losses were concentrated in wealthier countries and this amount hardly reflects the impact of disasters on the poor. Countries with similar levels of exposure to disasters experience very different human losses, a point illustrated by the report's new "Disaster Risk Index."

"In a sense, this report is arguing that there is nothing 'natural' about these disasters," says Andrew Maskrey, co-author of the report and Chief of UNDP's Geneva-based Disaster Reduction Unit. "The impact of disasters can be sharply reduced through the right development approach and there is a strong correlation between high vulnerability and low levels of human development."

According to UNDP's *Human Development Report 2003*, adverse climatic conditions and natural disasters are major obstacles hindering progress toward the Millennium Development Goals in key countries. While the destruction of infrastructure and the erosion of livelihoods are direct outcomes of disaster, the new report, *Reducing Disaster Risk: A Challenge for Development*, argues that these losses can also interact with and aggravate other financial, political, health and environmental difficulties. It therefore recommends that the political plans to meet each of the goals, adopted by world leaders at the Millennium Summit, take disaster risk into account.

"Governments should adopt policies that seek to avoid risk in the first place," says Mr. Maskrey. The report proposes use of better data and risk analysis as a basis for policy decisions and suggests better regulation of development, keeping in mind factors that can increase vulnerability to disasters, such as high, unregulated urban growth in earthquake-prone areas.

A first step toward global action on disaster risk reduction must be a clear understanding of the depth and extent of the hazard, vulnerability and disaster loss, the report argues, and suggests that disaster risks should be considered as an integral part of development planning, particularly during reconstruction after a disaster.

The report contains a newly developed Disaster Risk Index, which provides clear proof of the link between poverty and high levels of vulnerability to natural disasters.

"The social and economic impact of disasters have been very poorly documented in the past. This index is a very bold first attempt to do that," said David Peppiatt of the Geneva-based International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies. ■

—Trygve Olfarnes is a UNDP Communications Specialist based in New York.

THE FOUR DEADLY DISASTERS

Earthquakes, tropical cyclones, floods and droughts, are responsible for 94 percent of deaths triggered by natural disasters.

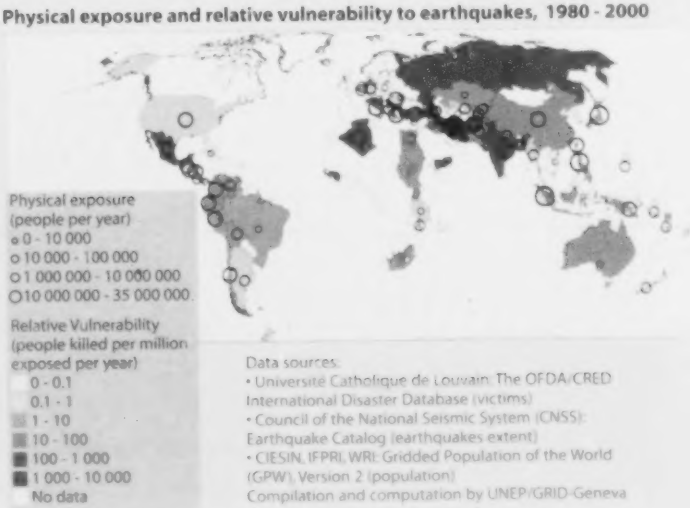
Earthquakes: About 130 million people exposed every year. Among the countries most affected were: Afghanistan, Algeria, Armenia, India, Iran, Italy, Mexico, Nepal, Russian Federation, Turkey and Yemen.

Tropical cyclones: Up to 119 million people exposed every year. Most affected countries were: Bangladesh, Honduras, India, Nicaragua, Philippines and Viet Nam, as well as small island developing states.

Floods: About 196 million people in more than 90 countries affected yearly, most severely during the period monitored (1980-2000) were in Morocco, Somalia, Venezuela and Yemen.

Drought: Affects 220 million people in 20 countries every year, mostly in Africa. Most severely hit were Chad, Ethiopia, Madagascar, Mauritania, Mozambique, Somalia and Sudan.

Physical exposure and relative vulnerability to earthquakes, 1980 - 2000



Data sources:
- Université Catholique de Louvain: The OFDA/CRED International Disaster Database (victims)
- Council of the National Seismic System (CNSS): Earthquake Catalog (earthquakes extent)
- CIESIN, IFPRI, WRI: Gridded Population of the World (GPW), Version 2 (population)

Compilation and computation by UNEP/GRID-Geneva

Democracies Struggle to Fine Tune System of Government

Photo: UNDP Mongolia

Mali delegate addressing conference on democracy.

ULAANBAATAR, MONGOLIA

The global trend toward democracy over the last 20 years has steadily expanded, but many countries that have made the transition to democracy are still trying to make their new form of government pay dividends to wider segments of their populations.

Finding that there is more to a democracy than the veneer of an election, delegates from 119 countries met in Ulaanbaatar last September at the Fifth International Conference of New or Restored Democracies, where they agreed on a broad range of ideas necessary to improve the quality of democracy in both new and mature democracies.

The overriding motif of the Conference, according to Luvsan Erdenechuluun, Mongolia's Minister for Foreign Affairs and president of the conference, "was the need for a better quality of democracy, its entrenchment and internalization of democratic culture."

Democratic systems of government, he says, are widely recognized as the most effective vehicle to ensure a framework of liberty and human rights for sustainable solutions to political, economic and social problems. But after a first phase, which included the establishment of basic democratic institutions such as competitive elections, multi-party systems and the rule of law, countries are finding that their democratic systems need to further evolve to encompass a substantial expansion of political and civic pluralism, as well as individual and group freedoms.

There are challenges that must be overcome to build a democracy, he says, that include the threat of poverty and social and economic exclusion.

Mr. Erdenechuluun cited a lack of transparency and accountability, of genuine participation and representation, and of a robust civil society as factors that can lead to a "shallowness of the democratic process." Another serious challenge, he says, is to "fight terrorism without compromising democratic values and human rights and freedoms."

The Ulaanbaatar conference, he says, "provided a rare opportunity for new or restored democracies to discuss together in an open and sincere manner the issues of consolidating democracy and achieving a broad consensus on the substantive and qualitative aspects of the democratic process."

The conference, which was organized by the Government of Mongolia with the assistance and support from the United Nations and other donor partners, resulted in the unanimous adoption of the Ulaanbaatar Declaration and the Plan of Action. ■

—By Sukhjargalmaa Dugersuren, the Communications Officer in UNDP Mongolia

UNIFEM Launches New Web Portal on Women, and War and Peace

The flashing lights on an interactive world map at UNIFEM's new Web portal, www.WomenWarPeace.org, clearly mark the world's trouble spots, countries where there is conflict and where women's security and rights are threatened. Click on the Democratic Republic of the Congo and statistics show that conflicts have claimed four million casualties over the last seven years. Scroll down and the information shows that women have not participated widely in peace and reconciliation efforts in the past. But that is changing.

The new Web site, on women, peace and security was launched on the third anniversary of a groundbreaking Security Council resolution that requires countries to consider the role of women in preventing and resolving conflicts, and in peacebuilding efforts. The resolution, 1325, reaffirmed the important role of women in ending strife and building peace and also noted "the need to consolidate data on the impact of armed conflict on women and girls."

While calling the Security Council resolution a "watershed political framework that makes women—and a gender perspective—relevant to negotiating peace agreements, planning refugee camps, programmes and peacekeeping operations, and reconstructing war-torn societies," UNIFEM Executive Director Noeleen Heyzer warned that "none of this can be achieved without accurate information and analysis."

The portal includes gender profiles of over 30 countries experiencing conflict or post-conflict, briefs on pertinent thematic areas as many issues that affect women and girls in situations of conflict transcend geographic demarcations; information about UN gender programming in the field in order to draw attention to best practices and lessons learned from the wider UN system on the implementation of resolution 1325. ■

—By Nanette Braun, the Communications Officer for UNIFEM

MATTERS OF FACT

Photo: Riccardo Gangale/UNDP

Women make up a majority of the electorate in Rwanda. Their vote helped give Rwanda the highest proportion of women in any parliament.

About 73 countries, with 42 percent of the world's people, do not hold free and **fair elections**. The global average for **voter turnout**, in competitive elections, is about 64 percent. Voter turnout in US presidential elections has dropped from 96 percent in 1960 to 51 percent in 2000. Rwanda has the highest percentage of women in any legislature—48.8 percent. While **women** make up 52 percent of the world's population, they hold only an average of 15 percent of seats in national legislatures. Between 1970 and 1996, the number of **daily newspapers** in developing countries has doubled. In 2003, at least 766 journalists were arrested, 1,460 physically attacked or threatened and at least 501 **media censored**. While there is no direct correlation between development and democracy, 42 of the 48 most developed countries are democracies. In the 20th century, two million unarmed people **have been killed** by governments in democratic countries; in authoritarian countries, 29 million were killed and in totalitarian countries, 138 million. **Government regulation** affects business: it takes two days to start a business in Australia and 203 days in Haiti.

Sources: *UNDP Human Development Report 2002/2003*; International Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance, http://www.idea.int/vt/index.cfm; Stockholm International Peace Research Institute *SIPRI Yearbook 2003*; Reporters Without Borders, *2003 Round-up*.

United Nations Development Programme
One United Nations Plaza, New York, NY 10017
www.undp.org

UNDP